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S E R M O N S,

BY THE LATE REVEREND

JOHN DRYSDALE, D. D. F. R. S. EDIN.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF EDINBURGH,
ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS,
AND
PRINCIPAL CLERK TO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE
AND CHARACTER :

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PROFESSOR OF GREEK, AND SECRETARY AND LIBRARIAN,
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH ;
AND
PRINCIPAL CLERK TO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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C O N T E N T S

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

	Page
ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND CHARACTER. - - - - -	ix
POSTSCRIPT RESPECTING THE SERMONS.	lvi

SERMON I.

ON CHARITY.

COLOSSIANS iii. 14. <i>Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.</i> - - - - -	I
--	---

SERMON II.

ON EDUCATION.

PROVERBS xxii. 6. <i>Train up a child in the way he should go, and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.</i> - - - - -	27
---	----

SERMON III.

ON EARLY PIETY.

ECCLIESIASTES xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* - - - 57

SERMON IV.

ON KEEPING THE HEART.

PROVERBS iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* 87

SERMON V.

ON THE WRETCHED CONDITION OF WICKED MEN.

JOB xx. 12, 13, 14. *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.* - 113

CONTENTS.

SERMON VI.

ON THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

PSALM cxix. 59, 60. *I thought on, my former ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* - - - 139

SERMON VII.

ON THE DANGER OF DELAYING REPENTANCE.

PSALM cxix. 60. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* - - - 163

SERMON VIII.

ON THE HAPPY STATE OF THE TRUE PENITENT.

PSALM xxxii. 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* - - - 191

SERMON IX.

ON THE MISERABLE CONSEQUENCE OF SENSUAL PLEASURE.

ROMANS viii. 6. *To be carnally minded is death.* - - - - - 213

SERMON X.

ON OUR UNFITNESS TO JUDGE OF OUR OWN CONDITION IN LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES vi. 12. *For who knoweth what is good for Man in this Life.* - - - 239

SERMON. XI.

ON THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS.

I SAMUEL ii. 7. *The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: He bringeth low and lifteth up.* - - - - - 271

SERMON XII.

ON TRUST IN GOD.

ISAIAH xxvi. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.* - - - 301

CONTENTS.

vii

SERMON XIII.

ON THE SOURCES OF DELIGHT IN PUBLIC
DEVOTION.

PSALM lxxxiv. 1. *How amiable are thy ta-
bernacles, O Lord of Hosts!* - - - 325

SERMON XIV.

ON ASPIRING AFTER PERFECTION.

GENESIS xvii. 1. *Walk before me, and be
thou perfect.* - - - 353

SERMON XV.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENESIS xxvii. 1. *Walk before me, and be
thou perfect.* - - - 379

AN

ERRATUM.

Page 95, line 1, *dele* for.

SECTION XIII

ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBENTURE IN DEBENTURE
DEBENTURE

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
1898

SECTION XIV

ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBENTURE IN DEBENTURE
DEBENTURE

SECTION XV

ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBENTURE IN DEBENTURE
DEBENTURE

SECTION XVI

ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBENTURE IN DEBENTURE
DEBENTURE

ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

JOHN DRYSDALE, D. D.

READ BEFORE THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH,

DECEMBER 17. 1792.

IF that sound judgement, which discerns what is right and wrong, with uncommon acuteness and precision; that firm adherence to rectitude of conduct, which excites admiration, and commands respect; those generous and benevolent dispositions of heart, and that indefatigable attention and beneficence to friends, which produce the most ardent affection, gratitude, and attachment on the part of those friends; that argumentative, powerful, and animated eloquence which comes from the heart, and irresistibly impresses on

the minds of the hearers, the sublime truths of religion and morality; that ardour of mind, and those superior talents which are restrained only by invincible diffidence and modesty, from informing and pleasing mankind by the production of various works of literary genius;—if a character possessed of such endowments and qualities as these, has any claim to be recorded among the monuments of men, the memory of the person who is the subject of the following narrative, ought not to be suffered to pass into oblivion.

DR JOHN DRYSDALE was born at Kirkaldy, in the county of Fife, on the 29th day of April, 1718; being the third son of the Rev. Mr John Drysdale, minister of Kirkaldy, and of Anne Ferguson, daughter of William Ferguson, Esq; Provost or chief magistrate of the same town. He received the elements of classical learning at the parish school, under David Miller, a man who had also the honour of instructing the celebrated Adam Smith, and

and James Oswald of Dunikeir, persons who have reflected so much lustre on their country, the one as a philosopher and man of letters, and the other as an eminent statesman. Under the same master, were also educated Dr John Oswald, Bishop of Raphoe, in Ireland, and Dr George Kay, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, men likewise of considerable talents and accomplishments. So that Miller had reason to boast that few individual masters of the most opulent and celebrated schools, had sent from their tuition a greater number of eminent men, than had been sent by him from the obscure school of Kirkaldy.

WHILE at school, John Drysdale greatly distinguished himself as a classical scholar; and there he contracted that strict friendship with the most eminent of his schoolfellows, particularly Mr Oswald and Mr Smith, which continued unimpaired through life. When he was thought to be sufficiently prepared for the University, to which young men go at a much earlier period in this country than in

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England,

England, he was sent to College at Edinburgh, in the year 1732. He there prosecuted his studies with great success, and soon attracted the notice of the Professors, by the rapid progress he made in the acquisition of knowledge *. After passing through the ordinary courses of languages and philosophy, he engaged in the study of divinity, the ultimate object of his repairing to the University; and having prosecuted this the usual time, he was admitted to trials, according to the forms of the Church of Scotland, before the Presbytery of Kirkaldy; and by them licensed to preach the Gospel, in the year 1740.

He

* This circumstance was communicated to me by the late John Campbell, Esq; of Auchallader, who was Dr Drysdale's fellow student, and, through life, one of his most intimate companions and friends, being himself a man of letters, and of great knowledge. Mr Campbell, in particular, informed me that John Drysdale, when at College, showed a singular acuteness and facility in acquiring the Greek language; and very much surprised the Professor, Mr. Colin Drummond, with the quickness of his progress.

He was soon after employed as assistant to the Rev. Mr James Bannatyne, minister of the College Church, Edinburgh; and while he publicly officiated there, he was much admired as an original, powerful, and rational preacher. His distinguished abilities, great integrity, goodness of heart, and agreeableness of manners, now procured him the friendship and confidence of several other persons, who afterwards became celebrated in the republic of letters; and, about this time, a particular incident occurred, which was an earnest of that generosity of mind, for which he was afterwards so remarkable. Mr Oswald, who was now making a figure in public life, had remained his firm friend, and had promised to bestow on him the first living in the Church, he should be able to procure. The parish of Kennoway, in Fife, became vacant, and at the disposal of Mr Oswald; but Mr Drysdale, having heard that his friend was embarrassed by a certain political connection, which made it extremely eligible to

bestow that living upon another candidate, he took an early opportunity of waiting on Mr Oswald, and having voluntarily renounced his claim, he begged of his friend, by all means to yield to the political application in favour of his rival; for which Mr Oswald ever after considered himself as under the greatest obligation to him. Indeed, at every period of his life, the conferring of a favour on a friend, was to Mr Drysdale a much more powerful motive of action, than the view of obtaining any personal emolument; and in examining the foundations of morality, a subject in which, as well as his friend Mr Smith, he took great delight, and to which he had paid particular attention, the feelings of his own mind were sufficient to induce him to reject with disdain the system of those philosophers who deduce all human actions from a selfish source.

IN the year 1748, he obtained a Crown-presentation to the church of Kirkliston in West Lothian, by the interest of the late John Earl of Hopetoun, to whom he had been recommended

commended by William Adam, Esq; of Mary-
burgh, Architect; whose third daughter he
afterwards married.

In entering upon this charge, he met with
some slight opposition, owing to an opinion
industriously propagated, that the style and
method of his preaching were not sufficiently
popular, and that his discourses contained too
great a proportion of the doctrines of morali-
ty. But this objection was soon obviated, af-
ter the people of the parish became better ac-
quainted with him; among whom he had not
remained long, till he became the object of a
very general regard and esteem, not only by the
kindness of his disposition and his unwearied
beneficence, but from the interesting and a-
nimated manner in which he inculcated the
great truths of religion and morality in his
sermons. Never were discourses better cal-
culated to command the attention, and in-
fluence the conduct, than those which he
preached to the crowded congregations that
attended him.

THOUGH he had accustomed himself to compose and write sermons with great care, yet he seldom, especially in the earlier part of his life, used to carry his written discourses to the pulpit. His usual method of preaching was, after carefully studying the subject, to speak from the heads of discourse which he had marked down. Often when he had entered upon the discussion of one of those heads, he grew so animated, and poured forth such a copious torrent of interesting illustration, that he found the time exhausted before he had finished one half of what he had intended to say. He was therefore obliged to defer the remainder of the subject to one or more subsequent discourses, which he continued with equal vivacity and force.

He possessed a most uncommon fertility of original thought; and although his eloquence was chiefly argumentative and rational, yet it was sometimes pathetic, often sublime, often embellished with the richest ornaments of original fancy, always bold and manly, and
always

always marked with the dignity and vigour of an upright mind. Hence he was extremely successful in exhibiting the grandest and most amiable pictures of virtue, and in exposing the meanness and deformity of vice in the most odious and detestable colours. Whatever he uttered was natural, unaffected and full of energy, always flowing from the heart, and always discovering a deep penetration into the human mind.

In entering upon his subject, he seemed at once to seize upon the most proper and rational views of it; and he carried his listening audience along with him in a rapid and fervid train of just, pure and elevated sentiment, from the beginning to the end of his discourse. His sermons by no means consisted, as had been insinuated, of the mere doctrines of morality. These he certainly did most strenuously inculcate; but, at the same time, no man ever brought home to the minds of his hearers, with greater force and efficacy,

cy, the genuine spirit of that religion which he preached.

His mode of delivery, though by no means correct, was extremely animated and striking. His gesture was frequently vehement; and though not always graceful, because not studied, but produced by his real feelings, yet it had a most powerful effect. Nor were the elevations and depressions of his voice by any means consistent with those rules which professed teachers of the art of elocution inculcate. These too, were entirely directed by his own sensations, and suited to his own original mode of speaking. But however irregular his tones and his emphasis might sometimes be, still what he uttered came always home to the hearts, and effectually commanded the attention of every audience.

In that part of the service of the Church of Scotland, which consists of a portion of Scripture read and explained from the pulpit, and which is called *the Lecture*, Mr Drysdale displayed uncommon ability and skill.

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He expounded the Scriptures in a plain, simple, and connected manner, so as to render the meaning quite intelligible to ordinary capacities. But wherever he found a passage that he either did not clearly understand himself, or despaired of making edifying to his hearers, he frankly avowed the difficulty, and told the audience that, instead of amusing them with a variety of conjectures, either of the commentators or of his own, he would pass on to something, from which they would reap much more advantage. For he never lost sight of what he had conceived to be the great object of all religious instruction, practical improvement, not speculative opinion.

THE instructions and exhortations with which he accompanied the ordinances of religion, particularly the dispensing of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, all tended to the same end, namely, the amendment of the hearts and lives of his people; and they were all delivered with such earnestness of manner, as convinced the hearers that they came from a
pure

pure and benevolent mind, intent upon promoting their best interests.

As the service of the Church of Scotland does not admit of set forms of prayer, but leaves the minister to use his own expressions in addressing the Supreme Being, Mr Drysdale's talents were in nothing more conspicuous than in this essential part of public worship. He did not, indeed, assume any studied solemnity of manner; but, with unaffected gravity and fervour, poured forth the genuine and copious dictates of his heart, in the most glowing, various, and proper expression; and so far was he from repeating any particular studied form of words in his prayers, that his audience used to remark that, on hearing the beginning of his sentences, they seldom were able to anticipate the conclusion.

SUCH were his abilities as a minister of religion; and with these the irresistible amiableness of his manners, and the known integrity of his private life, concurred to render him the object of the highest esteem and regard of

his

his parishioners. Even the lowest of the people respected and revered his character; and such was the success with which his instructions were attended, that it was observed of the morals of the inhabitants of the village in particular, which had been formerly noted for irregularity and vice, that they underwent a surprising change for the better, during the time of Mr Drysdale's ministry;—a strong proof of the great utility of well qualified teachers of pure and undefiled religion in any state!

Thus he lived for fifteen years, discharging, with fidelity, the functions of a country clergyman, enjoying the domestic society of his own family, and the conversation of many literary and clerical friends, who occasionally visited him.

At length, in the year 1763, his sincere and steadfast friend Mr Oswald, found an opportunity of serving him, by prevailing with the late Earl of Bute, to use his influence with
the

the Town-Council of Edinburgh, that Mr Drysdale might be admitted one of the ministers of that city. George Drummond, Esq; at that time Lord Provost of Edinburgh, exerted himself, with great activity, on that occasion. Though it was pretty well understood, that the right of presenting ministers to the city, was vested in the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council, yet a practice had prevailed, for the Council to waive the exercise of that right, and to permit the general Kirk Sessions of the city to be the electors of their own ministers. The Lord Provost thought proper, for good reasons, to deviate from that mode of election on this occasion; and he prevailed with the Council to grant a presentation to Mr Drysdale, to supply the vacant charge. This produced a considerable degree of opposition on the part of those who were desirous that the election of ministers should remain in the hands of the General Sessions. But the Council were determined to maintain what they imagined to be their right; and
after

after a civil process, the question was decided in their favour. Several interlocutors had been passed in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, hostile to the translation of the Presentee, which caused the affair to be brought before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, where they were all over-ruled, and the settlement ordered to proceed;—a decision which was finally affirmed by the General Assembly.

No sooner did Mr Drysdale enter upon his new charge, as minister of Lady Yester's, than all were convinced, that however disagreeable to some the mode of his introduction might be, no opposition was due to him as a man, and as a minister. The sermons which he preached in that church, attracted always a great concourse of hearers, whom he never failed to delight and instruct, by an eloquence of the most nervous and interesting kind. Both his train of thought, and his manner of expression, were evidently such as strongly indicated a vigorous understanding, an original

ginal genius, and a profound knowledge of the human heart *.

His reputation as a Preacher afterwards rose so high, that on occasion of an excursion which he made to London, to visit his friends and relations there, the late Mr Strahan earnestly requested, that he would furnish him with a volume of sermons for publication. His friends pressed him much to embrace this proposal; and he seemed at length disposed

* Mr Drysdale, as I have been informed, on being admitted to the charge of Lady Yester's, preached his first sermon from the following text: *Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.* The subject was extremely well chosen, after the opposition the preacher had met with; and accordingly it made a deep impression on the minds of a very crowded congregation. Fortunately the sermon has been preserved, and is the first in order of the ensuing collection. The reader of it will not be surprised that it made a deep impression; for it is most unquestionably one of the finest pieces of eloquence ever delivered from a pulpit.

to comply with their wishes. For, on his return to Scotland, he began to revise his sermons, with a view to make a selection for publication; but he had not proceeded far, till his diffidence induced him to procrastinate, and at last to relinquish, every resolution of that sort.

THE same native diffidence, and modesty were likewise the cause of his declining to appear as a speaker in the judicatories of the Church. While he remained in the country, he seemed rather to avoid taking much concern in the management of Church affairs; but on his coming to Edinburgh, he found himself so much connected with Dr Robertson, to whom he was always greatly attached as a friend, and to whom he considered himself as under great obligations, particularly for the earnest and effectual manner in which he had espoused his interest, in his translation to town, that he resolved to give that eminent leader every assistance in his power, in support of what was called *the moderate party*

in the Church; the chief object of whose policy was to maintain the right of presentation as established by law, against those who considered that mode of settling Ministers of the Gospel as a great grievance, and who stood up for the superior justice of popular election. With respect to the merits of the question itself, men will always be found to differ; nor is it proper here to enter upon the discussion of it. But be it as it may, Mr Drysdale was fully persuaded of the rectitude of that side he had embraced; and though he did not speak in the Church courts, Dr Robertson could not have been more fortunate in a co-adjutor. The native benevolence of his heart was conspicuous in his manners, which were extremely popular and engaging; and no sooner did he begin to extend his acquaintance with his brethren, than he wonderfully conciliated their esteem and affection. He took every opportunity of obliging them, both as individuals and as a body;
and

and his influence among them soon became very extensive.

WITHOUT any solicitation on his part, and even without his knowledge, the Marischal College of Aberdeen conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Divinity, by Diploma bearing date the 15th of April 1765: And the following year, the death of the Reverend Dr John Jardine having produced a vacancy in the Tron Church, which is collegiate, Dr Drysdale was translated thither, from Lady Yester's, which is a single charge. He there had the good fortune to have for his colleague the Reverend Dr George Wishart, Principal Clerk to the Church, for whom he had long entertained the highest esteem and respect; and Dr Wishart, in his turn, having a most sincere affection for *him*, they found the greatest comfort in being now so nearly connected. Never did two colleagues live together in more cordial and uninterrupted habits of friendship; their constant study be-

ing to oblige each other, by a perpetual series of good offices.

By the death of Dr Jardine likewise, Dr Drysdale now obtained a share in the few clerical offices, which the Crown has to bestow on the Clergy in Scotland. By royal warrant he was appointed one of his Majesty's Chaplains, with one third of the emoluments of the deanry of the Chapel Royal. The late Marquis of Rockingham was then Prime Minister; and he was determined in his choice of Dr Drysdale, solely by the recommendation of Dr Robertson.

As this office much improved Dr Drysdale's pecuniary circumstances, it furnished him with the means of indulging his inclination for domestic hospitality, to a much greater extent than he had hitherto done. His house was open at all times to his numerous friends and acquaintance; and it was their frequent place of resort. There, in particular, many of the younger Clergy, and other young men, enjoyed the advantage of his agreeable conversation.

versation, and never were happier than when in his company. There was something so cheerful, so unassuming, so benign, and, at the same time, so upright and decided in his manner, that he gained the esteem and good will of all who had any connection with him, without ever exciting the least degree of envy. Even such as were of different sentiments in Church affairs esteemed the man; and with several of these he maintained a very friendly intercourse. As his turn of thinking on all subjects was clear, acute and judicious, he was very expert in the method of conducting affairs. He had a peculiar facility and elegance of expression in the numerous letters he had occasion to write, in a most extensive correspondence which he carried on throughout the Church. Whoever applied to him for a favour, even from the remotest parts of the kingdom, never found the application treated with neglect; but, on the contrary, was soon convinced, that Dr Drysdale had made every practicable exer-

tion in his behalf. With such talents and such dispositions, it is not to be wondered, that in a few years he should have had a very great influence in the Church; and that the party with which he was connected should have derived essential advantage from his steady activity, prudence and popularity.

IN the year 1773, Dr Drysdale's numerous friends thought it due time to raise him to the dignity of Moderator of the General Assembly; the greatest mark of respect which an Ecclesiastical Commonwealth can bestow on any of its members; and being accordingly chosen without opposition, he discharged the duties of the office with great satisfaction to the venerable Court, and credit to himself*.

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* The General Assembly meets annually in May, and sits during ten or twelve days. It is usual for the Moderator to preach at the opening of the Assembly

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AFTER this period, his influence among the ministers and elders of the Church still continued to increase, while he persevered in seizing every opportunity to do all the service in his power, both to the Church in general, and to its members as individuals. When

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his

bly immediately after that in which he presided. In discharging this part of his duty, on the 19th of May 1774, Dr Drysdale chose for his text the following words—*Judge not*;—and the sermon he then preached is still spoken of by many who heard it in terms of the highest praise. It is much to be regretted that the manuscript cannot now be found. Having been informed that the Author gave it to one of his friends, Mr Peter Campbell, minister of Kilmichael in Argyleshire, who is since dead, I wrote to Mrs Campbell his widow, requesting the favour of her to endeavour to find it. To which I received for answer, “That she had carefully searched her late husband’s papers, but without success.” If this note should happen to be read by the person into whose hands the manuscript may have fallen, it may be the means of yet recovering it.

his venerable colleague Dr Wishart began to feel the approaches of old age, and the discharge of the duty of Clerk to the General Assembly was growing burdensome to him, Dr Drysdale was always at hand to assist and relieve him; till at last, during the Assembly 1778, Dr Wishart gave in a representation to the Court, expressing his desire to resign the Clerkship, in order that he might be re-elected in conjunction with another person, on whom he might, under the infirmities of age, devolve the laborious part of the duty. Next day the Assembly having considered this proposal, accepted of Dr Wishart's resignation, and then unanimously re-elected him in conjunction with Dr Drysdale, in the way in which he had desired.

IN the year 1784, it was apprehended that the choice of a Moderator of the General Assembly might occasion a dispute betwixt the two great parties in the Church. After deliberation, the leaders on the moderate side, pitched upon Dr Drysdale as their candidate; thinking

thinking that, of all others, he was most likely to defeat the views of their antagonists. But they found great difficulty in prevailing on him to comply with their wishes. His modesty disposed him to decline the honour of the Moderatorship a second time ; and he was afraid that his constitution, which never was robust, and now much weaker than when he held that office eleven years before, might not be equal to the fatigues in which he would necessarily be involved. Besides, he was extremely unwilling to put his friends to the trouble of coming from the remote parts of the country, on his account. By earnest solicitation, and particularly when it was strongly stated to him, that he ought not to consider this as his own cause only, but the cause of the friends with whom he had always acted, his objections at last were removed ; and as it was a maxim of his never to do things by halves, he determined to use his utmost exertions in collecting such a support, as might justify the favourable opinion that had been formed

formed of him. Accordingly, on the meeting of the Assembly, though a most respectable clergyman was named as the other candidate, Dr Drysdale, by a very great majority of votes, was seated a second time in the Moderator's chair. Immediately before the election, his opponents used every argument they could devise to influence the House against him, pretending that the bestowing of the honour of the Moderatorship twice on the same person, would seem to indicate a penury of eminent men in the Church, more especially as the candidate who was named, was the Clerk of the Court. The late Mr Crosbie, Advocate, whose powerful eloquence will be long remembered, vehemently contended, in particular, that it was an inconsistency which ought not to be permitted, that the same person whom the Court had constituted their perpetual Clerk, should also be elected their Moderator. But these objections, though strenuously urged, had no effect. It was known that, in various instances, the Moderatorship
had

had been repeatedly conferred on the same person; and Dr Wishart himself, who was present in the Assembly, had been elected Moderator in the year 1748, at the time he held the Clerkship alone; a difficulty which had been easily obviated by choosing an *interim* Clerk. He was still joint in that office, and might have acted solely, while his colleague presided in the Court; but on account of his age, Dr James Macknight was authorised by the Assembly to assist him.

THIS was the last great exertion which Dr Drysdale made. His friend Dr Robertson had, some years before, declined all concern in the public affairs of the Church. Since which time it was supposed that Dr Drysdale possessed more influence among his brethren than any other individual; and this Assembly afforded a clear proof of it. No person had appeared so eloquent, or possessed of talents so fit for a leader in the Assembly, as Dr Robertson. But after he withdrew, the conduct of the debates in that House seemed to be
shared

shared among a number of speakers; and while the claim of no single person, to be the ostensible leader, was admitted, it was well known that the prudence, and the influence of Dr Drysdale, had the greatest share in guiding all the measures of his party, while he himself claimed no merit, and had no pretensions.

He had been for a long time so well acquainted with the state of the two parties in the Church, that he used to calculate, with surprising exactness, what the issue of the votes would be in almost all the great questions that came before the Assembly. He would often, with that good humour which marked all his conversation, tell his acquaintance of the opposite party, by how many votes they would lose the question; and however sanguine at first they might be, they knew him so well, that they seldom disputed his accuracy.

His health was now greatly on the decline. So long before as the end of the year 1773, his constitution had received a shock, which, though visible to his own family, did not yet appear to his other friends. Death had deprived him of several of his children; and being a most affectionate parent, he was always extremely affected with the loss of them: And that year added to his former distresses the death of his youngest daughter, a most beautiful and promising child. With this he continued to be so much affected, that several years afterwards, when he was inculcating upon his audience the important lesson, "That man knows not what is good for him in this life;" and was observed, in one part of his discourse, to be agitated with uncommon emotion, it was evident to his friends that he alluded to his own situation*.

THOUGH his constitution continued to be gradually enfeebled, he still discharged the public duties of his ministry with little intermission; and it was observed that the annual approach

* See Vol. I. page 256, 257.

approach of the General Assembly always inspired him with unusual animation. For several years he had taken upon him the whole duty of the Clerkship, exerting himself also in every other respect, for the relief of Dr Wishart, his venerable colleague, now far advanced in life; till, in the year 1785, he lost that truly respectable and valuable friend. He preached a sermon on that occasion, from the following words: *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*; and though, by that time, his powers of composition, and the energy of his delivery, were much abated, he paid an affectionate tribute to the memory of the much respected partner of his labours, whose character, in describing that of the righteous man, throughout the first part of the discourse, he plainly alluded to; and in the conclusion, delineated in direct terms*.

AFTER

* The conclusion well deserves to be remembered. It was in the following words:—"And now, my friends,

AFTER this time, it was evident, not only to his particular friends, but also to his hearers,

“ friends, while I have endeavoured to illustrate the
 “ circumstances which accompany the last end of the
 “ righteous, I am persuaded that the character of your
 “ late worthy and much respected Pastor has occurred
 “ to your thoughts, as particularly connected with all
 “ of them. It pleased Almighty God, for the benefit
 “ of the world around him, to bestow upon him a con-
 “ siderable portion of that time to which He has limited
 “ the life of man upon earth: And during the whole
 “ course of his time, the good man is universally known
 “ to have maintained a dignified consistency of charac-
 “ ter and conduct, the foundation of that peace and se-
 “ renity of mind which attended him to his last mo-
 “ ments. In the public station which he occupied, he
 “ was an object of attention to successive generations,
 “ who all concurred in ascribing to him the praise of
 “ true goodness, a character to which his whole life
 “ justly entitled him,—a character honourable in the
 “ highest degree! by which he will be long affection-
 “ ately remembered. His piety towards God was
 “ genuine and sincere, without ostentation, or mixture
 “ of

ers, that the strength, both of his mind and body, was considerably impaired. The decline

“ of art to catch the admiration of the multitude; and
 “ the truth of it uniformly demonstrated by affection-
 “ ate regard to the children of God, and good will to
 “ all men; which are the true and only undoubted
 “ proofs of its reality. With a generous heart, and li-
 “ beral hand, he, as far as he had power, relieved the
 “ poor, and comforted the distressed. Through his
 “ whole life, he was the friend of the helpless, the en-
 “ courager and faithful counsellor of indigent merit,
 “ of which his true delight was to promote the success:
 “ And it may be truly said of him, that he never wearied
 “ of well-doing.

“ Those good qualities which he exemplified in his
 “ conduct, he warmly and powerfully recommended
 “ in his instructions as a Minister of Religion. In the
 “ exercise of that office, he shone forth with peculiar
 “ lustre; and it must be particularly mentioned, to his
 “ praise, that he was early one of those valuable men,
 “ who turned their hearers from speculation to practice;
 “ from barren speculation, to rational religion; from
 “ subtle distinctions in opinion, to the culture of true
 “ piety

cline of his health was much accelerated by a severe cough, to which he had long been subject.

“ piety and virtue ; wisely guarding them against the
 “ weakness of superstition on the one hand, and the
 “ dreams of enthusiasm on the other. Distinguished as
 “ he was by uncommon talents for conveying the truths
 “ of religion in a clear and persuasive manner, and by
 “ general applause from men, he still retained the ori-
 “ ginal and engaging modesty of his nature, assumed
 “ no air of superiority to other men, did nothing
 “ through strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind,
 “ was apt to esteem others better than himself ; and
 “ if it can be said of any man, it may be said of
 “ him, that the same mind which was in Christ Jesus,
 “ was also in him.—He is now removed from us, and
 “ gone to receive from the great Father of all, the
 “ high reward of—*Well done, good and faithful servant,*
 “ *enter into the joy of thy Lord.*—Let our esteem for the
 “ virtues of our excellent friend, now departed, rest
 “ long upon our minds, and inspire us with ardent de-
 “ sire to resemble him in temper and conduct,—*to die*
 “ *the death of the righteous, and have our last end like*
 “ *unto his !*—that we may all meet in the exalted re-
 gions

subject. He continued, however, occasionally to preach, though his discourses wanted that energy, both in composition and delivery, which used to distinguish them. The Rev. Dr Hunter, Professor of Divinity, had now become his colleague in the Tron Church; and although their sentiments, on several points of church government, were different, yet the greatest harmony, in other respects, subsisted between them. Dr Hunter, who was a much younger man, had formerly been his hearer in Lady Yester's, and was a great admirer of his ministerial talents and eloquence at that time; and now, by every good office in his power, he endeavoured to alleviate the declining years of a colleague whom he greatly respected. Dr Drysdale, in his turn,

"gions of perfect virtue and happiness, never again to be separated."—When he was going to mention the particular comfort that he himself had found in his intercourse with his deceased friend, his feelings would not permit him to proceed; and he was obliged to desist, before he had said all that he intended.

turn, was much gratified by these attentions, and had a due sense of their value.

For some years, during the sitting of the General Assemblies, when he felt the discharge of the duty of Principal Clerk, at times too fatiguing for him, he was allowed to retire, and one of the assistant clerks officiated in his stead. At the meeting of the Assembly in May 1788, he appeared in his place, and acted as Principal Clerk the first day; but finding his strength unequal to the remaining parts of the duty, on the second day he requested permission of the Court to be assisted by his friend and relation *, who now pays this willing tribute to his memory; and his request was unanimously granted.

But he did not long survive the Assembly of that year. Early in the month of June, his cough attacked him with extraordinary violence, and soon weakened him so much, that he could no longer rise from his bed. He still, d 2 however,

* The husband of his eldest daughter.

however, retained his wonted endearing manner to his family,—only less animated, but affecting in the utmost degree. Thus he continued to grow weaker and weaker, until his constitution at last seemed to be quite worn out; and in him the Church of Scotland lost one of her greatest ornaments, on the 16th of June, 1788.

SUCH was the conclusion of the well-spent life of this excellent person; whose integrity was inflexible, whose amiable conversation and manners were expressive of the extreme worth and benevolence of his heart, whose respectable character adorned his sacred profession, and who was the delight of his friends, and of his family. Though gentle, unsuspecting, and candid, in an extraordinary degree, yet, as his soul was inspired with that noble elevation which arises from conscious virtue, and freedom from all deceit, his indignation was excited, whenever he detected in others any duplicity in conduct, or any deviation

deviation from the road of honour. As, in his public appearances, the energy and animation with which he delivered and enforced his instructions, carried a conviction that they flowed directly from the heart; so it was universally allowed by all those who were acquainted with his private life, that never any man more successfully illustrated what he taught, by his own conduct and manners*. His charity to the indigent, was as extensive as his circumstances would admit; and in some cases, went far beyond what ordinary men would deem to be consistent with prudence. He took the greatest pleasure in protecting, encouraging, and bringing forward young men, who seemed to him to be possessed of talents which promised to be useful in those situations which were the objects of their pursuit, either in Church or State; and he was indefatigable in availing himself of every opportunity to serve them. He lived to have the satisfaction of seeing many of them suc-

d 3 cessful

* See particularly the conclusion of Serm. IV. Vol. II.

cessful in life; but no one ever observed him arrogating any merit to himself on that account, or even betraying a single expression which might seem to hint a claim on their gratitude. It is not, therefore, surprising that he was so much beloved by his younger friends.

BUT Dr Drysdale continued also to enjoy the affection of the friends of his youth. Mr Oswald, Dr Smith, and Dr Robertson, have been already mentioned. Though his intercourse with Dr Smith had been, in consequence of the distance of their situation, less frequent for many years than they could have wished, yet they used to meet occasionally in their native town, to which they were always fondly attached; and there, in company with Mr Oswald, and some other companions less known to fame, they spent many of the most pleasant hours of their life. When, afterwards, Dr Smith came to reside in Edinburgh, they then associated together with less interruption; nor was there any one among

mong all the numerous friends and acquaintance of that excellent man, whom he loved with greater affection, or spoke of with greater tenderness, than John Drysdale. Two other intimate friends of Dr Drysdale's earlier years, and on whom he had set a great value, died long before him. These were Mr William Cleghorn, and Dr William Wilkie; the former of whom was the immediate successor of the late Sir John Pringle, in the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, a young man of great genius, and from whom much was expected; but he was cut off in the flower of youth: The latter, known to the public as the author of the *Epigoniad*, and *Fables in Verse*, was distinguished also among a numerous circle of literary friends, for extensive and profound erudition, for a copious and inexhaustible flow of original, amusing, and instructing conversation, and likewise for some whimsical and diverting peculiarities of character. With the family of the Adams, whose genius and

taste in the elegant arts of architecture and designing have vied with the talents of the poet, the historian, and the philosopher, in reflecting lustre on their native land, Dr Drysdale long lived, in a constant reciprocation of good offices, both as the much-respected relation, and as the intimate friend. His wife, Mary Adam, and two daughters, compose his surviving family. He has left likewise behind him a brother, whom he loved with the most ardent affection, George Drysdale, Esq; formerly Provost of Kirkaldy, and now Collector of the Customs in that town, the steady and much esteemed friend also of the late Mr Oswald and Dr Smith; and when they visited the place of their nativity, the companion of their social hours.

TO those who were not intimately acquainted with the subject of the foregoing narrative, the language of eulogy may seem to have been admitted to too great an extent; and exaggeration

ration of praise may be suspected, merely because such virtuous men as the late Dr Drysdale, are not often to be found. Those, however, who knew him best, will give their cordial assent to what has been said; for in all that has been asserted, truth has been aimed at; and the language of panegyrick may accord sometimes with the dictates of truth.

It may not, however, be improper to subjoin the testimony of his surviving colleague; which will not be suspected of partiality, as it proceeds from one whose sentiments in church government, were different from his; and therefore a testimony which, in doing justice to the memory of the deceased, reflects credit on the character of its author.

IN the sermon preached by Dr Hunter in the Tron Church, the Sunday immediately after Dr Drysdale's interment, he said:—
 “ That he was not so well qualified to do
 “ justice to the abilities of his late respect-
 “ able colleague as many of his brethren,
 “ because

1 ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE

“ because his acquaintance with him, though
“ not of a recent date, was not long inti-
“ mate; and since the time of their beco-
“ ming colleagues, he was in a great mea-
“ sure disabled from the public exercise of his
“ ministry. But I am old enough (continued
“ he) to remember the exertion of his mi-
“ nisterial talents in another church of this
“ city; and to me he appeared to possess a
“ large stock of good sense and knowledge of
“ the world, with great powers of natural
“ eloquence, which were happily employed
“ in the illustration and enforcement of many
“ important truths and doctrines of religion.
“ His abilities in expounding Scripture, I
“ did then particularly admire.

“ As to his private character, I have reason
“ to believe, that he was faithful and affec-
“ tionate in the discharge of various relative
“ duties, as of husband, father, brother, ma-
“ ster; and that his memory will be long
“ dear to those who were connected with
“ him in these and other relations. His tem-

“ per

“per was placid, and his manners were kind
“and obliging. Besides his relations, many
“of his brethren, and candidates for the mi-
“nistry, will bear their ready testimony to
“his affability, hospitality, and readiness to
“serve them. A considerable number of
“them, I believe, were much indebted, un-
“der God, to his friendship and influence
“for the situations of comfort and usefulness
“in which they are placed.

“THAT he held a high rank in the estima-
“tion of the ministers and elders of this
“Church, may be with certainty inferred
“from his being raised twice to the chair of
“Moderator of the General Assembly, and
“vested with the office of Principal Clerk
“of this Church. Though his sentiments
“in ecclesiastical judicatories did not some-
“times accord with mine, I respected the
“zeal and activity of his exertions for those
“principles of church government which ap-
“peared to himself to be right; and I respect-
“ed them the more that his conduct was not
“marked

“ marked with violence of spirit, or severity
 “ to those who differed from him. During
 “ my connection with him as a colleague, we
 “ have lived in that harmony which became
 “ that relation; and I have had the plea-
 “ sing experience of his moderation of tem-
 “ per, and of his grateful sense of any little
 “ attention which I had it in my power to
 “ pay to him.”

IN the same church, in the evening of
 the same day, one who had known him more
 intimately*,—one of those who had shared
 his friendship, who had admired him in the
 familiar intercourse of domestic life, and to
 whom his memory will be forever dear, ad-
 dressed the affections of the audience in the
 following pathetic manner.—

“ ALAS! has there been one year of our
 “ life, which has not often reminded us, in
 “ its progress, how quickly the generations of
 “ the

* The Reverend Mr William Greenfield, one of
 the ministers of the High Church, and Professor of
 Rhetoric in the University, of Edinburgh.

“ the children of men are passing away from
 “ the face of the earth? This sacred place in
 “ which we are now assembled, reminds us of
 “ one affecting instance of such melancholy
 “ truth. If virtue or piety could avail to re-
 “ deem from the grave, an abler and worthier
 “ than I would at this time be exhorting you
 “ in the paths of goodness, and offering your
 “ devotions to the throne of grace. But
 “ alas! *there is but one event to the righteous,*
 “ *and to the wicked.* The wise, the virtuous
 “ and the pious fall undistinguished with the
 “ crowd!—You shall hear no more that well-
 “ known voice, which once animated your
 “ duties, and soothed your sorrows! He is
 “ gone for ever, whose venerable example
 “ and amiable manners so gently, yet power-
 “ fully, engaged us to the virtues which he
 “ taught. Nor shall the friends of his heart
 “ evermore experience that tenderness of af-
 “ fection which, endeared his private inter-
 “ course, and softened the cares of life. He
 “ is gone before us, a memorial, too affect-
 “ ing

“ing to be easily forgotten, or slightly re-
 “membered, of the common fate which a-
 “waits us all!

“But think not that it is in vain for the
 “righteous to have preserved their integrity;
 “—that they perish in the dust, and are for-
 “gotten for ever!—No;—if they perish here,
 “they revive hereafter; and the promises
 “which, in this land of their pilgrimage, they
 “saw but afar off, shall more—far more
 “than compensate their labours and afflic-
 “tions. He whom we now mourn, is him-
 “self rejoicing in the reward of those virtues
 “which he displayed amongst us. He knows,
 “to his happy experience, that it was not in
 “vain for him to have devoted his superior
 “talents to the noblest of purposes,—the pre-
 “servation of true and undefiled religion.
 “That integrity which could not be corrupt-
 “ed, that fidelity which could not be sha-
 “ken, that boldness in the right which could
 “not be daunted, are not forgotten by the
 “Lord whom he served.—No; nor the less
 “splendid,

“splendid, but still more endearing graces,
 “which adorned his domestic life; the mild
 “serenity with which he endured the di-
 “stresses that troubled his repose; the gene-
 “rous benignity with which he received and
 “protected the young who confided in his
 “care; the gentleness with which he repro-
 “ved their errors, and directed their inex-
 “perienced youth; the ardour with which
 “his affection glowed for the family whom
 “he loved, and the friends who were the
 “chosen of his heart.—Yes, my brethren, the
 “virtues of the good man shall live for ever;
 “his *patient continuance in well doing* shall
 “be crowned with immortal glory!”

POSTSCRIPT

POSTSCRIPT

RESPECTING THE SERMONS.

HAVING undertaken to draw up a short account of the late Dr John Drysdale, to be laid before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, of which he was a member, I was induced to read, with great attention, the Sermons in manuscript which he left behind him, that I might be enabled to form a more perfect judgement of his merit as a Preacher. I had been accustomed, as his hearer for many years, to admire his talents and eloquence; and that admiration has been increased, by the perusal of these discourses. They appeared to me so well calculated to be useful, and so excellent in every respect, that it seemed an injury to withhold them any longer from the Public.

WHETHER

WHETHER the Author had any distant view to their publication when he composed them, cannot now be ascertained. It is known that he once thought of publishing a volume, upon being urged by his particular friends; but that his modesty and diffidence at last occasioned his giving up that idea, as has been particularly mentioned in the foregoing account of his life and character. But though he had finally determined never to publish any thing himself, yet as he never signified to his family any desire that his Sermons should be suppressed after his death, they have considered themselves at perfect liberty to yield to what they had every reason to think would be no injury to the Author's reputation.

BESIDES the discourses which form the ensuing collection, and a few more which have not been printed, there were others of the Author's composition which I have never seen; and which, I was sorry to learn, cannot now be found. Of these it is thought that some were given away by himself to different

ferent friends who requested them from him and, at one period in particular, he lost a considerable number, which he never was able to recover.

IN resolving upon the present publication, I did not think it sufficient to rely on my own opinion, but had recourse to a friend much better qualified to decide respecting the merit of such compositions; and in whose taste and judgement I had the greatest reason to confide. The Reverend Mr William Moodie, minister of St Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, whose approved excellence as a preacher, and whose known integrity as a man, have deservedly procured him a great share of public and private esteem, undertook, with the utmost readiness, at my desire, to peruse all the manuscripts. In consequence of which, I received from him the following letter, which I here insert with great satisfaction, because, while it shews that these discourses have not been rashly obtruded upon the public, it enables me, at the same time, to present the reader

* See above, p. xxxi. note.

reader of them with a criticism which I am persuaded he will allow to be both elegant and just.

Dear Sir,

I HAVE read with great care the manuscripts which you sent me. The high respect I entertain for Dr Drysdale's memory, and the recollection of his friendly attention, to which I was so much indebted in my early years, may render me, perhaps, a partial judge of the merit of his sermons; but I am persuaded I deliver an opinion in which every candid reader will heartily concur with me, when I say that they will form a most valuable accession to those excellent models of pulpit eloquence which our language affords.

I CONSIDER utility, as the chief recommendation of a sermon; and this quality Dr Drysdale's sermons possess in a most eminent degree. They discover throughout, a most accurate knowledge of human nature, and breathe a high spirit of piety and
virtue,

“ virtue, which can hardly fail to transfuse
“ itself into the mind of the reader. The
“ style is every where forcible and impressive,
“ and, at the same time, pure, perspicuous,
“ and elegantly simple, free from all false or-
“ naments and studied refinements, and from
“ every thing that might betoken a light and
“ frivolous mind.

“ WHAT I particularly admire is, that uni-
“ ty of design which appears in every sermon.
“ The Author seizing on that view of his sub-
“ ject which promises to lead to the most use-
“ ful discussion, carries the reader along with
“ him, in a regular and uninterrupted stream of
“ argument, from the beginning to the end of
“ the discourse. He never loses sight of the
“ great end of preaching. While he exhibits
“ the most rational views of the Doctrines of
“ Religion, he is always careful to illustrate
“ and enforce their practical influence. He
“ discovers uncommon reach and acute-
“ ness of judgement, in ascertaining the na-
“ ture, and the limits of our several duties,
“ in distinguishing genuine virtue from what
“ has

“ has only the appearance of it, and in de-
“ tecting vice under the various forms which
“ it assumes. His reasoning is always per-
“ suasive and animated, fitted at once to in-
“ form the understanding, and to warm the
“ heart. When he addresses himself to the
“ passions, his style becomes frequently abrupt
“ and vehement; and his mind, full of the
“ importance of his subject, pours itself forth
“ in soliloquy, apostrophe, and the other high-
“ er figures of speech, which are never in-
“ troduced in order to excite surprise, but in
“ which the reader will always find himself
“ prepared to join.—In short, these sermons
“ seem admirably calculated to inspire the
“ mind with high sentiments of piety to God,
“ trust in Providence, independence on the
“ world, admiration of virtue, steady and re-
“ solute attachment to duty, and contempt
“ of every thing that is base or dishonourable.
“ WITH these qualifications, I have no
“ doubt that they will be favourably received
“ by the public at large; and to the friends
“ of Dr Drysdale they will be a most plea-
“ sing

“sing memorial of a character which they
“held in the highest veneration; for in the
“amiable pictures of virtue which his sermons
“exhibit, they will recognise the features of
“his own mind. I am, dear Sir, yours fin-
“cerely,

“WILLIAM MOODIE.”

BESIDES the general approbation contained in the foregoing letter, Mr Moodie obliged me with written remarks on each discourse separately; guided chiefly by which, I was enabled to make the selection for the press; and he also assisted me in the correction of the proof sheets, which were almost all printed directly from the Author's own manuscripts, without being transcribed.

IN thus performing the office of editors of a posthumous work, we were fully sensible of the delicate and sacred nature of such a charge; and we concurred in opinion, that the only freedom to be used should consist in correcting any inaccuracies of expression, in removing such redundancies and repetitions as
might

might be expected in discourses composed with a view to be spoken, and in making a few necessary transpositions, all of which we thought the Author himself would have approved of in preparing his productions for public inspection. To this idea we strictly adhered; nor are we conscious of having ever substituted any sentiments of our own in place of those of the Author, or of having injured the beautiful energy and simplicity of his style, by any wanton or unnecessary alterations.

For my own part, while I acknowledge with gratitude my obligation to the valuable friend who has assisted me, it is with peculiar pleasure I reflect upon the share I have had in rescuing from oblivion, and in bringing forward to public view, compositions of such apparent utility. In frequently perusing them, I have enjoyed hours of inexpressible satisfaction; and I gladly embrace the opportunity of joining my name to these productions of a character whose memory I shall never cease to revere!

ANDREW DALZEL.

EDINBURGH, }
Jan. 1. 1793. }

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 with a view to be taken; and in making a
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 ment; and I gladly embrace the opportunity
 of joining my name to their production of a
 character whose memory I shall never cease
 to cherish.

ADAM SMITH.

Edinburgh,
 Jan. 1792.

S E R M O N I.

ON CHARITY.

COLOSSIANS iii. 14.

Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

AMONG the many excellencies ascribed to charity in holy scripture, there is none greater than this mentioned in the text, that it is *the bond of perfection*. It is the vital principle that animates all the virtues of the Christian temper, and supports them in full vi-

Vol. I.

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I.

S E R M.

I

gour. It is the bond that unites them, so as to render the Christian every way finished and complete. It is the spirit which, pervading the whole, gives to each virtue reality and beauty and worth. By charity we are here to understand, not merely a bountiful relief of the wants of the poor; for this is only a part, though an essential part indeed, of the great virtue of charity; but also that generous sensibility which enters into the feelings of mankind, that universal love and benevolence to all our fellow-creatures, which prompt us to desire their happiness, and to promote their true interest, to the utmost of our power. Such is the charity which is here meant, and which might have been rendered *benevolence*, or *love*.

The truth of the assertion in the text, will appear from considering the influence of charity, *first*, Upon the virtue of those minds wherein it prevails; and *secondly*, Upon the perfection and happiness of human society.

I. IN the first place, as to the virtues of the individual, charity is justly said to be *the bond of perfection*. It will appear to comprehend all the other virtues within itself, and to be the principle whence they derive their greatest excellence, and the immediate cause of their stability and permanency. For what is that secret charm in virtue, which at first sight captivates the heart? What is the beauty we admire in any character, but the benevolence of a disinterested heart? Let an action be ever so beneficial in itself, and productive of useful consequences, deprive it of good design, and you at once strip it of all its charms. If it be considered as flowing from interested motives, it must appear quite destitute of every thing amiable in a moral view, how useful soever at the same time it may be in a political one. It is benevolence then which is the fair form we admire, which alone communicates grace and beauty to every action we call great, or worthy, or virtuous.—But to be more particular.

S E R M.

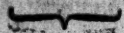
I.

I. *Justice*.—It is this quality that gives to justice its chief value, renders it equal, impartial and uniform. What makes justice a virtue of such importance, but the necessity of it for preserving the peace and happiness of men? and what can dispose us to the uniform practice of it, but hearty affection and good will to men? Remove that affection, and upon how narrow a foundation would justice stand? What sentiments could we entertain of any person apparently just to his neighbours, if we knew he felt no generous affection for them in his heart? Would we not conclude that he affected a virtue beyond his reach? And were we to give any account of his motive for assuming the fair show of justice, could we suppose it any thing else than a desire to gain credit to himself, for the more effectual promotion of his own interest, or than the dread of punishment and retaliation which he might incur by an unjust conduct? And if we view justice unaccompanied with charity, exercised in punishing the guilty,

guilty, what other name could we assign to it, than that of harshness of temper, or the wanton exercise of power? It is from benevolence then that justice derives its chief value. This tempers and corrects its austerity, and preserves its vigour; and the seemingly just person, who has no charity, whom we conclude to be actuated by a fierce and rugged spirit, or to be a sly imposer on the world, appears, when considered as acting by the influence of charity, in the amiable light of a truly virtuous and good man.

2. *Courage*.—Again: What but charity gives to courage and resolution their chief value? It argues strength of mind, to be brave: And to expose one's self to danger, when prompted by benevolence, and warranted by a good cause, is indeed a great and heroic virtue. But surely when bravery is exerted in executing the destructive schemes of ambition, or of any other selfish passion, it loses the name of virtue, and degenerates into the most terrible of crimes. In the hands

S E R M.

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of ambition and avarice, it has been an universal firebrand, and destroyer of human peace; an instrument of the vilest cruelty, and the ruin of the mightiest nations of the earth.

3. *Temperance.*—Farther: Charity insinuates itself even into the private virtues, and exerts an influence on those private duties which a man owes to himself.—I mean those of temperance and moderation in the enjoyments of life. That man whose heart has felt any thing of the divine pleasures of benevolence, will have but little relish for the pleasures of luxury and excess. He cannot think of wasting all on selfish gratification, when he reflects what numbers of his fellow-creatures are reduced by sad necessity to pine away with want, and eat the bitter bread of misery. His tender commiseration of these his unhappy brethren, makes him retrench every idle article of expence, in order to grant them relief with greater ease. Such œconomy, without question, has more real magnificence

ficence in it, than all the splendour of unmeasured extravagance; and notwithstanding the seeming paradox, the most opposite thing in the world to true liberality, is its own excess—profusion. Thus the rich man in the parable could part with nothing to the poor beggar, save a few *crumbs that fell from his table* *. But real charity or benevolence checks the spirit of profusion and excess, that the means of gratifying itself, that is, of doing good, may never be wanting.

4. *Contentment*.—Again: The grace or virtue of contentment will be found to derive its greatest strength and security from the prevailing power of charity. It is impossible to enjoy human life in its true taste, without the uniform and steady exercise of this disposition. The man whose heart is animated by its sovereign influence, has a source of satisfaction within his own breast, that bestows the most exquisite relish on all his enjoyments; a satisfaction too that will not desert

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him,

* Luke xvi. 19.

S E R M.

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him, though abandoned by all the deceitful pleasures of the world. His active zeal in his brethren's service naturally corrects the eagerness a man is apt to have in the prosecution of his secular views, and of consequence prevents anxiety and vexation of spirit, on account of his disappointment. His consciousness of inward uprightness, and of his affectionate endeavours for the happiness of others, preserves his mind unclouded and serene, and content with life in its darkest scenes. In the midst of his severest afflictions, he finds a joyful retreat in the hope of approbation from God, in the approbation of his own mind, and very often in the sympathies of those friendships which his own benevolent heart has procured him. In these he enjoys far sweeter pleasure than all the high boasted blessings which outward prosperity can bestow. On the other hand, that discontent and disgust at life which some persons are ready to entertain, will be often found to arise chiefly from their ignorance of the pleasures

fures of benevolence to comfort them under its disappointments and misfortunes.—To proceed :

S E R M.

I.

5. *Devotion.*—The influence of charity on religious devotion, must not be passed over. The love of God is the most exalted principle of goodness, but for this very reason we must not expect to acquire it all at once. Our benevolence must gradually rise through intermediate stages of perfection; and we cannot raise it to the Supreme original of goodness, till we first learn to love and honour man, his image. *If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?* Does not intercession for others form one of the most considerable parts of the duty of prayer? and are we not commanded to intermingle the very petitions we offer up for ourselves, with due regard and good will to our neighbour? The favourable answer to our prayers is made expressly to depend on this issue: *We must forgive the trespasses of men, otherwise our heavenly Father will*

S E R M.

I

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will not forgive our trespasses *. In a word, if charity to mankind does not enter into every piece of devotion which we offer up to the throne of grace, that devotion will be only the effect of servile fear, without the smallest spark of love to God.

6. *Faith and Hope*.—Again: With respect to the Christian graces of faith and hope; as often as charity is mentioned along with them in the gospel, we never find the smallest competition. It is always treated with the highest preference to both. Thus the apostle †, after having mentioned faith and hope,—with great marks of honour indeed, adds, that *charity is greater than them both*. And in the second verse of the same chapter, he says, *Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing*.

7. Were we to carry the subject farther, it would appear that, without the animating power of charity, humility, how plausible soever in the eyes of the world, is at bottom a

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* Matth. vi. 15.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

gross imposture, the subterfuge and disguise of pride, or a contemptible meanness of spirit. It would likewise appear, by carrying on these reflections, that the intellectual virtues of knowledge and wisdom, derive their highest value from subserviency to the generous purposes of an affectionate and benevolent heart;—that without this, knowledge is nothing but idle speculation, and wisdom itself appears in no better a light than the cunning and shrewdness of a selfish spirit.

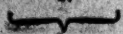
8. Were we to reverse the view, it might be shown at large, that a principle so friendly to virtue as charity, is the most opposite thing in the world to all irregularity and vice; that it is impossible that real charity can subsist with any habitual vice a long time together in the same mind. This amiable virtue arms the mind against the transports of intemperate anger, extirpates the seeds of pride, and quells the first insurrection of envy. It elevates the heart above the importunate childishness of fear, levels in it the aspiring

S E R M.

I

S E R M.

I.



ring insolence of ambition, and lifts it far above the grovelling meanness of covetousness.

Thus doth the sovereign grace of charity reduce every thing under due subordination to itself. It exercises a kind of creative power upon the mind, and fashions it by its own perfect laws. It unites its faculties together, and makes them all conspire in one full concert, towards the great and godlike end of doing good. This undoubtedly presents us with the most fair and finished plan of a human character, where all the virtues are made to terminate in one end, and to pay their several tributes for promoting the general and common interest of goodness. Thus any man, who taken singly is a very inconsiderable being, and makes a very minute figure in the world, obtains a rank of higher dignity, and becomes an useful member of a great society of reasonable beings, whereof God himself is the sovereign head and governor. But if these sacred bonds of charity

S E R M.

I

rity be ever slackened or taken off the mind, all its dignity vanishes, and all the virtues of the character sink to dissolution. Those very virtues, in that sad calamity, change their nature, and lose their former names. Without charity, compassion degenerates into weakness, courage into brutality, wisdom into artifice, civility into flattery, patience into inflexibility, and temperance into mean and sordid parsimony. Surely if there is any thing worthy or excellent on earth, any thing that can attract the veneration of men, or the approbation of God, it must arise from the prevailing influence of charity, that pure and unblemished source of all the virtues which can adorn the human heart.

II. HITHERTO we have considered the influence of charity on the virtue of individuals. We proceed now to take it in a larger view,—to consider the perfection it introduces into public society; and to show that
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S E R M.

I.

in this respect also it is *the bond of perfectness*.
And on this head let us consider,

1. Its influence on the smaller associations in private life. In such societies, a benevolent character is of all others the most graceful and engaging, and by a kind of generous infection, catches the imitation of every attentive beholder. The evidence of love in one's self, is the surest attractive of love from other men. It operates by some irresistible charm, and produces such effects as almost no other power can either equal or destroy. It can charm the fiercest spirit, bind the most abusive tongue, reconcile the most incensed enemy, and mollify the most unrelenting heart. A charitable spirit extends its reforming influence, and diffuses cheerfulness and contentment every where around it. From it also proceeds the blessing of private friendship, that most fruitful source of human felicity. Friendships indeed, it must be owned, do seem to take place where benevolence is not the bond that secures them, but which are contracted

tracted sometimes with a view to personal interests, and at other times with a worse view—to the low and unworthy ends of ambition and deceit. These, however, little deserve the honourable name of friendship; and in the last mentioned case, are in truth no better than conspiracies and combinations against the public good, and are, at the same time, so frail in themselves, that on the least shifting of interest, they must vanish into smoke.

2. But let us ascend into a higher station, and behold the influence of this divine principle, when acting in a public sphere. The tranquillity of every nation, we know, is maintained by the authority of positive laws, and the terrour of penal sanctions: For in the present imperfect state of things, there is no other effectual method of preserving the public repose, but a certain measure of force and authority to overawe the unjust, the violent and audacious; human laws being a kind of props devised to support a tottering edifice. But was the power of benevolence felt
universally

S E R M

I

universally prevailing, then might we see the world stand self-balanced and secure, without the need of either laws or punishments to hold it up. Benevolence in that case, would do the work of government, and serve to every person as an inward law, infinitely superior to the highest positive obligation; and we find in fact, that every society which is not founded on principles of mutual love among the members, and of affection to the welfare of the whole, when viewed in a just light, is no society at all, is a contradiction to itself, and involves its own ruin in its bosom. It is necessary then that there be one public good, comprehending all private interests, and which is itself founded on their preservation; otherwise universal distrust must necessarily prevail, to which confusion and weakness and misery must succeed of course. *A kingdom divided against itself, saith our Saviour, can never stand.* Let its riches be ever so immense, its dominions ever so extensive, or its armaments

ments ever so formidable; these are but weak and deceitful resources, if intestine discord, rage, or the tyranny of men overbear the government of just and righteous laws. On the other hand, it is the power of charity alone which can produce that general good understanding, and those vigorous efforts for public good, which are the real sinews of war, and form all the stability and happiness of peace. Without this, a nation can neither be strong abroad, nor safe at home; neither provided against the alarms of foreign invasion, nor the fury of civil wars. Charity, in a word, is the light and joy of this world, which, without its enlivening spirit, would quickly become inhospitable and forlorn; a spectacle of ruins, and the habitation of death.

3. It is proper here to take notice of the influence and authority of this great principle, on the religious as well as civil state of mankind. Were we to turn over every page of history, from the earliest to the present times, we should find that the world has

S E R M O N

I

not suffered more from any thing than from superstitious and false religion, where the divine affections of love to God and love to man were supplanted by a blind zeal for particular ceremonies and particular opinions; a zeal fomented by crafty men, for the sake of their own secular and interested views. It appears from all the testimonies of experience, that if religion once lose its charity, it degenerates into superstition. This truth we find nowhere so evident as in the melancholy days of Popery, that religion of terror, persecution and blood; which in plain defiance to the mild and pacific genius of original Christianity, and even to human affection itself, enslaved the consciences of its votaries, subjected them to the most shocking spiritual thralldom, and authorised the most barbarous treatment of such brave men as durst refuse to sacrifice their reason to the grossest inconsistencies and impostures. Thanks be to our heavenly Father, that our lot has fallen in happier times, when Christianity is

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I. Vol. I. in

in a great degree restored to its primitive spirit; and the principles of charity are generally so well understood and acknowledged. May that true spirit be more completely diffused, and still more perfectly understood!

S E R M.
I.

III. It remains, now, to mention the obligations which the above description of charity brings us under to the practice of it. And first:—

I. As it has appeared, that the most sure and speedy way of attaining all the parts of true goodness, is the exercise of benevolence, hence it challenges our earliest and greatest attention. For other virtues can never find access to the heart, while it remains a stranger to the benign influences of charity: And as God has laid the foundation of this affection in every mind; if men would improve it as they ought, they might open an easy way for ascending to all the heights of virtue. In proportion as this affection should gather strength through exercise, the difficulty of

E R M.

I

conquering bad habits, and acquiring good ones, would gradually diminish. Hence it appears, with how good reason the Apostle insists that we should *put on charity above all other things*.

2. As a farther incentive to the cultivation of this divine virtue, let us attend to the inestimable blessings which every society, and indeed the whole state of human things, must reap from its prevailing influence. If there is the smallest spark of goodness, or sentiment of humanity dwelling within us, how should they kindle, and expand themselves, when it lies in our power to support the honour, or advance the interest and happiness of our fellow-creatures? Are we not conscious of a certain triumphant emotion of heart, when we behold the Public flourishing around us, and when great services are done to it, though by other hands than our own? With what glowing alacrity then, and intenseness of spirit, ought we to put forth our own powers of doing good? The opportunities for so doing

ing are surely not few, nor the difficulties insurmountable. Would every man in his own respective sphere, public or private, exert more firmness and uncorrupted honesty, more diligence and disinterested zeal for the public good, this would be a far happier world, and each man a considerable gainer in the issue. Public spirit would lift its head; industry would increase; useful knowledge and art would flourish; piety and religion,—in a word, every thing that can make a people wise, great or good, would universally prevail.

Many, indeed, are the discouragements which, in the present corrupt state of things, obstruct the blessed influences of charity. We have often the mortification to see the most generous attempts for promoting public good disconcerted, and totally defeated, through the negligence, the malice and selfish passions of men. No wonder then that the spirit of benevolence runs so low in the world. This must ever be the case, while men are so intent on interested ends, and

S E R M
I

bustle with such unwearied and exclusive activity in pursuing them;—while so much envy, ambition and distrust, divide the hearts of men, and even, alas ! too often determine the fate of nations.—O unhappy World ! how art thou thus made a stranger to those heavenly blessings thou mightest enjoy under the peaceful government of calm Reason and pure Benevolence ! How miserably art thou racked and torn to pieces, by the giddy rage of wild and hostile passions !—Yet how much more unhappy still, wert thou to be deserted by good men, and left a prey to the tyranny and madness of the wicked !

But let the good and virtuous beware of taking such a distaste at an active life as to abandon it. What though they should be outnumbered, let them not be dispirited nor overawed. Let them quit their pretensions to the high character of goodness, if while its sacred interests are at stake, they stand tamely by, and will not stir for their support. Every honest man ought to look on himself as one of

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the bulwarks of the world; and to consider himself as warranted by a divine commission, resolutely to oppose the spreading growth of vice, with his warmest admonitions, his best example, and, in a word, by all the power which God has put into his hands.

S E R M.
I

LET us then, my brethren, in opposition to every discouragement, persist in the unwearied exercise of charity. Have we not the great, the divine example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Redeemer of men? His charity and love were put to the severest trial; left to struggle,—not with difficulties only, but with ingratitude, indignities and cruelty; and at last even with death itself. Inspired by love, He stood firm, though deserted by his friends, persecuted by his enemies, and despised by all. He sustained a conflict with the united powers of an impious world, and finished it with immortal honour and success. The fruits of his victory we now enjoy, though born in distant times, and places far

S E R M.

I

remote. His love to us rose always superior, and bore him out in triumph to the end of his sufferings.

Besides; have we not, to inspire and fortify our minds, the enlivening expectation of a state hereafter, where nothing can stop or interrupt the happy influences of charity? There love shall enjoy its perfect triumph;—it shall flourish in immortal vigour, and reign with uncontrollable dominion. There shall we be admitted to the most intimate communications with Him who is the Supreme Original of all goodness and perfection; whose infinite benevolence embraces all nature, and spreads its animating vigour through the whole system of created beings. There shall our love to each other be pure and undecaying, unalloyed by jealousy, and uninterrupted by discord; neither abated by indifference, nor cloyed by satiety, nor extinguished by ingratitude. What though these evils disturb the operations of benevolence in this world? The Lord reigneth; the storm will soon blow over,

over, and all shall be well at last. Mean S E R M
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time, let us ever pray to God, that he would
animate and strengthen in us this amiable dis-
position, and train it up for more sublime and
perfect exercises in that exalted state, where
love shall flow in endless streams through eve-
ry heart !

S E R.

111

ON CHARITY.

25

over, and all shall be well at last. Mean-
time, let us ever pray to God, that he would
increase and strengthen in us this amiable dis-
position, and train us up for more liberal and
perfect exercises in that exalted faith, which
has shall flow in unobscured streams through every
heart, and be the source of all our mercies.
And let us ever be ready to do good to all
as we have opportunity, with cheerfulness, not
slothfully, as when we have leisure, but
as if we were to do it to the Lord, for the
Lord loveth him that doeth good, and he will
pay him again. And let us be ready to
communicate to all, as we have need, with
a liberal heart, without murmuring or
repining, for the Lord loveth him that
gives freely, and he will increase his
treasure. And let us be ready to receive
of all, with a humble heart, without
shame or blush, for the Lord loveth
him that is lowly, and he will exalt
him. And let us be ready to suffer
for the Lord, with a cheerful heart,
without murmuring or repining, for the
Lord loveth him that suffers for him,
and he will reward him. And let us be
ready to die for the Lord, with a cheerful
heart, without murmuring or repining,
for the Lord loveth him that dies for
him, and he will reward him. And let us
be ready to live for the Lord, with a
cheerful heart, without murmuring or
repining, for the Lord loveth him that
lives for him, and he will reward him.

S E R M O N II.

ON EDUCATION.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and,
when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

AMONG the various exercises of the extensive virtue of charity, that which has for its object the relieving and assisting of the indigent, claims a considerable share of our attention. Humanity urges it, and it is expressly required by the laws of our religion. It is good to supply the wants of those who, by age or infirmity of mind or body, are utterly incapable of doing this for themselves. It is no less laudable and proper to put into
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S E R M.
II.

S E R M.

II.

the hands of those who are poor and unfortunate, though not yet disabled by age or infirmity, the means of exerting their own activity, diligence and industry, in providing for themselves, and such as depend upon them for support. By this last way of directing charity, more happiness is communicated than by any other mode. For no enjoyments are equal to those which are the fruits of a man's own labour, and accompanied with the consciousness of performing what is proper and right.

But if, it is praise-worthy to supply honest industry with the means of exerting itself profitably and usefully, (which may not be in every man's power,) it must be more so, to endeavour to communicate not only those very qualities of honesty and industry, but, along with them, every other virtue. This office of love is within the reach of all men in some degree, but particularly of all parents and guides of youth. For youth is the season most favourable for the acquisition of every useful, valuable and virtuous

virtuous quality. Hence the advice of the text, directed to parents and guides of youth : *Train up a child in the way he should go, and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

S E R M
II

WHAT I shall attempt in the following discourse is, *first*, To explain and illustrate the duty of *Training up a child in the way he should go* : And, *secondly*, To point out the most proper means of doing it.

I. FROM the manner of expression habitual to this inspired author, it is evident that the phrase, *the way in which a man should go*, signifies that conduct which sound wisdom and virtue dictate, and which the fear of God and regard to his commandments enforce ; and *training up a child* in that way, is leading him to know and to esteem the rules and principles of such conduct, and to accustom himself to act agreeably to those rules and principles from his earliest days. In explaining this duty, I shall confine myself to the consideration

S E R M.
II.

tion of such particulars as appear most necessary and essential.

I. As the foundation of all future improvement, a young person should be taught the habit of attention and application of mind to whatever he is employed in. The great object of education is to qualify a human creature, to fill some useful station in the world, by which he may promote his own happiness, and at the same time that of his fellow-creatures; which can be done only by the uniform practice of every duty he owes to God and man. Thus only can he secure to himself the justest satisfaction in every condition of life, and be best prepared for the more complete happiness of a future state. Now, in order to be so qualified, the first thing requisite for him is to acquire a habit of attention and application to whatever he is engaged in; that if it is any part of knowledge he is in pursuit of, he may obtain a distinct perception of it; or if it is a work in which he is employed, he may become able and skilful in

in the performance of it. Wisdom, virtue, and skill in working, are gifts of God, but not of such a nature as to force themselves upon us, whether we use the means of obtaining them or not. God has furnished us with those means, and has rendered persevering application to the use of them necessary on our part. Every branch of knowledge requires to be attentively considered, before it can be fully unfolded. Skill in any work is the effect of repeated trial; and a habit of practising any virtue, is equally the fruit of persevering application. A habit of attention therefore, of minding what he is about, is the first thing a child is to be taught. It is the foundation of improvement of every kind, and of every useful and every virtuous part of a human character.

Parents and masters cannot do a more unkind thing to children, than, from carelessness or false tenderness, to suffer them to be idle; that is, either wholly unoccupied, or inattentive to what they are doing when seemingly

S E R M
II

seemingly employed. It is hard to say which of these two habits is most destructive. That both of them are so in a great degree is very evident. An idle and undisciplined mind has been often compared to an uncultivated field, which instead of producing plentifully things necessary and useful for men, wastes its prolific power in sending forth a variety of things useless or noxious to the human race. The comparison is just. The mind of man is of an active nature, and if not exerting that activity in some regular plan and course of operation, it will exert it either in pursuing sometimes one trivial object, and sometimes another; (which is the least blameable state of an idle person) or, as its passions alternately rise, it will break out in actions hurtful to itself and to mankind. Children, therefore, are first to be taught to love occupation, and led to a habit of persevering attention to whatever they are engaged in. If this is not done, a contrary habit will fix itself in the mind. Dissipation, restlessness, and

and incapacity of attention and of assiduous labour, will grow up with the mind, and disqualify it for any useful or valuable improvement; and much more for the highest of all attainments, piety and virtue. How, for instance, shall a person of a dissipated mind obtain just conceptions of the Divine Nature, and proper impressions of the duty men owe to God? How can he come to a sufficient knowledge of his own nature, or learn wherein its true excellence and happiness consist? How shall he be able to form any just apprehension of the necessity of that method of salvation which is established by the Almighty, and of the wisdom and mercy of God displayed therein? These things are of a spiritual nature, and to be *spiritually discerned*. If then such a person cannot know distinctly even the objects of his senses, how can he know or understand, to any purpose, such things as are the objects of thought alone? How, without persevering attention, is it possible to avoid being imposed upon by the things of this

S E R M.

II.



world, all of them courting our affections, telling us how good they are, and continually soliciting us to seek after them, as what alone can make us happy? How is it possible otherwise, in the midst of so many snares, to maintain fixed attachment to piety, truth, probity, and every other virtue?

2. It is necessary to give a child the earliest impressions of the great distinctions of good and ill, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, of what is praise-worthy, and what is blameable, to assist him in forming the justest notions of these essential differences, and accustom him to act agreeably to them. In order to support a righteous character through life, it is absolutely requisite to be possessed of just notions, and a lively sense of the great difference between moral good and evil, with a high esteem and love of the one, and a contempt and abhorrence of the other. We accordingly find it marked in scripture, as one cause of the wickedness of the

the wicked man, that *he abhorreth not evil*. But to render any thing the object either of our love or averſion, it muſt appear to us to be of an amiable, or of a hateful, nature, which implies our previous knowledge of that nature. Before a young perſon then can love what is good, and abhor what is ill, he muſt know the nature of each, and the mighty difference between them; and the ſooner he diſcerns this difference, and is properly affected by it, ſo much the better. For if the mind be not early occupied by juſt ſentiments on this important ſubject, unhappy miſtakes, and corrupting prejudices and paſſions will take poſſeſſion of it.

S E R M.

II.

The ſeeds of corruption lie in the paſſions of the human heart, which often not only overpower the judgements of conſcience, but tend to confound and pervert them, ſo far as to cauſe men to loſe the proper idea of the diſtinction betwixt good and evil. Theſe paſſions, for want of proper education and diſcipline, are ſometimes allowed to acquire

S E R M.
II

force, before the judgement is well informed and ripened. To prevent this worst of all disasters to the soul, all diligence must be used to inculcate upon young minds the essential difference betwixt good and ill, with the corresponding affections. The approbation of what is good, and disapprobation of what is ill, are so congenial to the human mind, that it is capable of feeling and exercising those sentiments much sooner than men are apt to think. For instance, how soon is the mind capable of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood? It should therefore be early encouraged, to mark the distinction. A strict regard to truth, and abhorrence of falsehood and lying, are among the first habits which a child ought to learn. Happily there is in children a natural tendency and inclination to speak the truth, which is an excellent foundation on which such a habit may be raised, and a strong reason for cultivating it early. Another strong reason for cultivating

an early habit of veracity is, that this virtue is naturally accompanied with the valuable qualities of courage, resolution, firm and generous independence, a contempt of every advantage that can be obtained, and every disadvantage that might be avoided, by the sacrifice of truth;—most excellent materials all of them for composing a worthy and righteous character; and deserving to be cherished with the utmost care in every young mind. On the contrary, a habit of falsehood and lying, is productive of the greatest depravity and meanness.

In like manner, a child may be early taught the difference betwixt just and unjust, right and wrong. He is soon sensible when he himself is injured. His spirit rises against the injury and resents it. He feels he has a right to complain, and to require redress. From this circumstance alone he may readily be led to see and acknowledge, that others have rights of the same nature with his own,

S E R M.

II

and equally sacred; and hence learn to abhor doing, as well as suffering, wrong. Thus children may be early taught to feel the obligation of our Saviour's golden rule, *of doing to others as we would that they should do to us*: So careful has the Almighty been to lay, in the human soul, the foundation of that rule, which is of such importance through the whole of life, and in all the intercourse men have with one another. Such being its importance, the first opportunity,—the first dawnings of a capacity to discern its nature, are to be laid hold on, to nourish a sense of it in the mind of a young person, to enlarge his views of it as his mind opens, and to teach him, of himself, to extend it to all the different branches of justice, equity, candour;—and of humanity and mercy likewise; for to these also its influence reaches.

3. In the same manner, a sense of gratitude, and an abhorrence of the contrary; the habit of expressing gratitude, and of acting conformably to it, are to be carefully cherished

cherished in young minds. A grateful disposition is inseparable from a righteous mind; and yet, valuable as this quality is, it is commonly thought to be rare amongst men. It is to be hoped that this reproach is not so generally deserved as is represented. But whatever be in that, it will be allowed, that the ways of the world, tend so directly to strengthen a selfish and interested disposition, that too much care cannot be taken to counteract, and, if possible, to prevent, the effect of this tendency, by every proper method; and amongst others, by cherishing a grateful temper in youth,—by fixing a sense of gratitude deep in the mind; for with gratitude true generosity delights to dwell. The most immediate object of the gratitude of children is parental tenderness. They are soon sensible of their dependence on their parents. They look up to them for support, for protection, for information and counsel in all cases; and upon finding them able and willing to supply their wants, to satisfy their desires, to protect

S E R M.

II



them from harm, to guard them against danger, to inform their understandings, and to correct their mistakes, their ingenuous hearts are touched with a lively sense of gratitude, and at the same time with a respect and reverence which the superior wisdom and knowledge of the parents, joined to unwearied kindness, tend to inspire. The obligations of gratitude to parents, and to those who behave with like kindness, are soon felt by young minds, and the respect due to wisdom and goodness united, springs up almost of itself. Great care therefore is requisite on the part of parents and teachers, not to check or discourage the growth and progress of these right affections, by foolish or improper behaviour; or by neglecting to instruct and shew kindness to their children. A habit of gratitude and respect to parents, deserves to be assiduously cultivated, on account of its propriety and of its influence in strengthening that respect and love which mankind mutually owe to one another. By being early exercised towards parents,

rents, and those who act a parental part, it more easily afterwards extends itself to others. All men having occasion to shew kindness, and to communicate knowledge to each other, become mutual objects of respect and gratitude.

S E R M
II

This habit deserves still more to be cultivated, on account of its connection with that filial reverence and gratitude which all men owe to Almighty God. Accordingly we find that the Almighty, after prescribing the duties we owe to Himself, immediately subjoins the commandment, *to honour our father and mother*. It seems placed in this first rank of duties to our fellow-creatures, because it has the most immediate influence upon, and strictest connection with, right affections to God Himself. This connection of our duty to God with the duty of children to parents, is universally felt and acknowledged, the Almighty being regarded as the common Father of mankind. And this leads me to observe,—

4. That

S E R M.

II

4. That in order to complete *the training up of a child in the way he should go*, he must be taught to employ his thoughts on the obligations men lie under to reverence and love God; that these affections may take full and timely possession of his soul. For producing this effect, the habit of revering and loving his parents, is an excellent preparation. As soon then as the mind of a child is so far enlarged, as to be capable of forming any just conception of the wisdom and goodness of God, he ought to be assisted in forming it, that he may feel and exercise reverence and love to his Maker. Teach him that all things depend upon God; and he will gradually apprehend this truth more and more clearly. Teach him, that the world is guided by the wisdom and goodness of God; and his heart will more and more admire its all perfect Ruler. Shew him, that the great distinction between moral good and evil is established by the Almighty,—that it is the foundation of the laws prescribed by Him for the conduct

duct of his rational creatures ; his heart will bear testimony to the truth of this doctrine : And the obligations to observe these laws, of which he is already in part sensible, will affect him with double energy, when he considers them as enforced by divine authority. He will feel it to be not only wrong, base and disgraceful, but impious also to neglect or transgress them. Teach him farther, as soon as he can comprehend it, the doctrine of the Gospel ; and his love and reverence to God will rise to a higher pitch. Teach him to remark the corruption and degeneracy of human nature ; and the more clearly he discerns, on the one hand, what it ought to be, and on the other, what it really is, and compares the one with the other, the more will he admire that wisdom and goodness which have provided for its renovation and final happiness. Shew him the Saviour of the world, in full correspondence with the merciful designs of our heavenly Father, interposing to screen us from the miserable effects of disobedience, banishing

S E R M.

II

banishing darkness from our minds, and weakness from our spirit, wiping the tears from our eyes, and both sorrow and terror from our heart, offering himself our kind leader through all difficulties to eternal rest, and assuring us of a crown of perfect righteousness at last, if we believe and trust and obey him.— Thus shall you present to him new motives to revere and love God, new grounds of attachment and love to truth and righteousness of every kind, when you teach him that the result thereof will be eternal honour and happiness; and new reasons for detesting all evil, when you assure him that the end thereof shall be everlasting disgrace and misery.

SUCH are the general outlines of the duty of *training up*, or educating a child in the way he should go; in drawing which, I have confined myself to point out what appear to be the most essential virtues, and of most extensive influence in forming the heart entirely to goodness. For whoever clearly sees and admires

S E R M
II.

admires the excellence, and strongly feels the obligations, of truth, of justice, of gratitude, and of love to God; and has his mind both enlightened and invigorated by faith in Christ Jesus, will not be found wanting in regard to any other duty. From these, as from their proper source, will afterwards flow temperance, patience, brotherly kindness and charity, with their concomitant graces.—It is to be remembered, that the great distinctions which have been insisted on, are amongst the first spiritual or moral objects, which a young mind can be enabled to discern; and for that reason the first care should be employed in teaching them.

The common concern of parents is to educate their children in the knowledge of some business, by means of which they may live comfortably in the world. Nothing can be more proper. But this is so far from being inconsistent with the more important education recommended in the text, that the one is necessary for the advancement and successful

S E R M.

II

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S E R M.

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S E R M.

II.

ful progress of the other, nothing being more ruinous to true worth than idleness. The education advised by the Wise Man, is of a general nature, and of common concern to all; respecting equally the high and the low, the rich and the poor; for every rank, condition and employment in life give opportunity *to do justly, exercise mercy and walk humbly with God.* The one of these kinds of education, therefore, does not exclude the other; but that which has piety and virtue for its object, being the most important, will be allowed to deserve the first and greatest care and attention, instead of being considered only as a secondary object of concern, as sometimes unhappily it is.

II. IN carrying on this education, the most proper and most effectual methods, are Instruction, Example and Correction.

I. It is by Instruction only, and by accustoming the minds of youth to proper attention, that we can communicate to them the knowledge

knowledge of any truth, or rule of right practice; and the impression made upon the heart by this knowledge, must be fixed and rivetted by good Example; by which is to be understood, not only the actions a man performs, but also the thoughts and the sentiments he expresses; the whole, in fine, of his conversation. It is chiefly by means of example, in this sense of it, that most part of parents have an opportunity, and that all parents are able most effectually to *train up their children in the way they should go*. When the example of those whom a child naturally respects, is agreeable to the sentiments he has adopted from the instructions of wisdom, his heart is captivated by the beauty of holiness. But if the example of parents stand in direct opposition to those just sentiments, he is confounded; the impressions made by sound instruction are defaced; and being left without any certain guide to direct him, he becomes an easy prey to headlong and extravagant passions. Suppose a child
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S E R M.

II.

well instructed in the duties of piety to God, and of truth and justice and good will to men; suppose him at the same time daily led to observe from the conduct of his parents, that *God is not in all their thoughts*; suppose he often hears them treat with contempt that sacred name which he has been taught to honour; often hears them express the bitterest malice towards their fellow-creatures, whom he has been taught to love; often sees and hears them set at nought the duties of truth and justice, when these stand in the way of their fancied interest or advantage; and seldom hears from them a single sentiment consonant to those he has received from better instructors;—what effect must all this produce?—Hard is the fate of that child who is so unhappily connected! It is to be hoped that such depravity of example is rarely to be found; but it is to be remembered, that in proportion to the degree in which it prevails, will be its bad influence on the mind of a child. And what must we expect that influence to be? One of these

these two consequences must follow, either the child will feel a growing abhorrence of his parents; or if any regard remains for them whom nature teaches him to revere, he will feel a growing indifference to those moral obligations which he sees them make so light of. In such circumstances as these, how can a child be trained up in the habit of reverence, love and gratitude to parents, a habit so requisite for forming the mind to reverence and love of God, respect for just authority, special respect to wife and good men, and love of order in human society? But when the reverse of all this happily takes place, when example concurs with good instruction, they affect the young mind with accumulated force. In such a case, every thing co-operates to inspire the soul with true wisdom and virtue; and the blessing of God earnestly implored faileth not to join its assistance.

3. In addition to the methods of instruction and example, correction will sometimes be necessary. Correction supposes that the child

S E R M.
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S E R M.
II.

has adopted some wrong notions, or contracted some bad habits; and it consists of two parts. The first is to point out what is wrong and erroneous in the notions adopted, and by contrasting them with the opposite truths, to convince the judgement, and lead the young mind to correct itself. The second is to break the force of the bad habits; which may often be done in the same manner, by shewing wherein they are wrong, and inducing the young mind cordially to renounce and forsake them. But when this method fails, when the youth sees what is right, and persists in doing wrong, to bend such obstinacy, chastisement becomes necessary; and he who in such a case withholds it, destroys his own child. But in such a case only is it to be used; and when used, it must always be with that calmness and tender reluctance which will convince the child that nothing but concern for his welfare could have forced the parent to employ it. Chastisement, when mixed with rage and intemperate passion, defeats

defeats its own purpose. It may lead a child to dissemble, but it does not tend to affect his heart. On the contrary, it leaves a spirit of mutiny and discontent within him. It may lead him to counterfeit a change, but it will not readily lead him to calm reflection upon his conduct, which is the first step to real reformation.

S E R M.
II.

It is a maxim never to be lost sight of in the important subject of education, that whatever the child learns, whether it be knowledge or virtue, must be chiefly his own doing; that is, his own mind must be the willing and active instrument of acquiring it. The teacher is only the hand that guides him, or that points out the way. He himself must walk in it. The human mind is not like timber or stone, which you force to take any shape or figure you chuse. It is of an active nature, and must always have an active and immediate share in forming its own shape and figure,—its own temper and character. In this way, agreeably to its nature,

S E R M.

II.

the Spirit of God operates upon it. The Spirit of God renders it both willing and able for every good work; and by exertions of that willing activity, diligence and assiduity, which are the fruits of the Spirit, it acquires both knowledge and virtue; and in no other way can they be acquired. Hence the necessity of taking the inclinations and willing application of a child along with you, in your endeavours to educate him aright; hence the necessity of such treatment as tends to gain his heart. When his heart is gained, he soon makes extraordinary progress; and the wise parent reaps an ample harvest of joy, and the full reward of his affectionate care, in the actual improvement of his child. Let chastisement therefore never be inflicted, but in cases of manifest necessity, never used where advice and remonstrance are of themselves sufficient to gain the end proposed, never mixed with rage, which tends directly to alienate the affections of a child; but let it always be accompanied with clear evidence of

of the tenderest affection.—He must be a perverse youth indeed! whom such treatment does not affect in the most sensible manner.

S E R M.

II.

FROM what has been said, it appears, that very much of the propriety and the success of education depends on the conduct of parents, and of those with whom children pass their early days. These enjoy the precious opportunity of leading their young minds to form the justest notions, and acquire the justest habits of life and conduct. This opportunity, if neglected, can never be recovered. Hence the necessity of the earliest attention to this great object, upon which depend, in a great measure, their future good behaviour, real worth and happiness.

AMONG the methods of training up a child in the way he should go, I have made no mention of rewards; because, though it may perhaps be sometimes proper to bestow rewards of different kinds on particular exercises that

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S E R M.
II.

require extraordinary exertion, yet for the purpose of forwarding virtuous education, their propriety is more than doubtful. The natural reward of virtuous conduct is the approbation of the virtuous mind itself, and the sympathetic approbation and esteem of other men. By proposing rewards of a different kind, which have no natural relation to the virtue you wish to encourage, you evidently teach children to prize such things too much, you lessen their estimation of the value of right behaviour in comparison of such things; you lessen their love to it on account of itself and its own genuine effects. Let children uniformly feel these effects. Let them feel that they are beloved and esteemed while they do well; and whatever special favours are bestowed upon them, let these ever be, and appear to be, natural expressions of that fixed regard and affection of which they are the objects. God has annexed to every virtue its own proper and natural reward.

Let

Let such rewards be allowed to follow every right and commendable exertion. Let no absurd, partial or harsh management, prevent their natural course; and thus no rewards of an arbitrary nature, need to be applied; nor indeed, if they were, could they produce any good effect; on the contrary, their tendency, as we have just observed, is to pervert and corrupt the judgement concerning what is best and most desirable.

THUS I have endeavoured briefly to explain the duty of *training up a child in the way he should go*; and the method to be observed in doing it: And if he is so trained, it is evident, that the happiest effects will flow from it through the whole course of his life. For *when he is old he will not depart from it*. The strong impressions made, and the habits of virtue and goodness contracted at this early period, will continue to influence his conduct through life, will be productive of the

S E R M.
II.

greatest comfort that can be felt by him here,
and prepare his mind for enjoying complete
felicity in the world which is to come.

S E R.

S E R M O N I I I .

ON EARLY PIETY.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

PIETY towards God is the only effectual principle of holy and righteous conduct through life. Hence the propriety of establishing this principle early in our minds,—*of remembering our Creator in the days of youth,* before the infirmities of age, and especially before corrupt habits have enervated the soul,
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S E R M .
I I I .

S E R M.
III.

and while the mind is as yet unbiaſſed by prejudice and unclouded by paſſion; for ſuch a mind only is capable of *remembering its Creator* with proper affection. We are required to *love and to fear God,—to ſet the Lord ever before us*, in order to enable us to *keep all his commandments*; which expreſſions are of the ſame import with that in the text, and uſed in ſcripture according to the ſeveral views which are taken of the Almighty. His goodneſs is the object of our love; his wiſdom and perfect righteouſneſs, of our admiration and reverence; and all his perfections united ſtrongly incite us to *ſet Him always before us*. *Remembering our Creator* is the moſt general of theſe precepts, and indeed includes them all; particularly it has a ſpecial reſpect to the end for which He made us; and of which we ought never to loſe ſight. The period of life when this ſhould be moſt carefully inculcated is youth; both becauſe the want of experience renders young minds a more eaſy prey to ſeduction; and becauſe ſucceſs is moſt

most likely to be attained, while the heart is not yet hardened by vicious habits; but tender, fit to receive good impressions, and open to instruction; whereas the attention, desires and endeavours of persons somewhat advanced in years, are habitually bent to one predominant purpose; which, however wrong or unreasonable, they are seldom found to forsake. Youth therefore is a precious season, to be carefully improved for laying a good foundation of piety towards God; that our advancement in virtue may keep pace with our years, being secured and forwarded by an early and habitual *remembering of our Creator*.

IN discoursing from the words of the text, it is my present purpose, *first*, To point out the happy effects of habitual *remembrance of God* upon the hearts and conduct of all men, but especially of youth; and *secondly*, To shew what is implied in the *evil days and years*

S E R M.

III

years in which they who forget God shall have no pleasure.

I. I. THE remembrance of our Creator tends to stop the progress of iniquity in the heart, when it has been seduced by vicious allurements.

Such is the condition of this world, that before men are well acquainted with it, they are often caught in the snares of vice and folly. This, in thinking persons, occasions the liveliest sorrow and regret; and they naturally form resolutions of guarding against such allurements for the future. As it is *the remembrance of their Creator* which at first excites that sorrow and regret for sin, so it is only a habit of such remembrance which can give effect to these purposes of amendment, and prevent them from proving false, ill-founded and deceitful, or from being put off to some distant period.

The soul of man has an invincible desire of immortality, flowing from its own natural anticipations

anticipations of futurity. Hence his views of happiness are not confined to the narrow limits of the present life. Accordingly, we shall hardly find a single person who has thrown off all regard to virtue, because, among other reasons, he thinks virtue necessary for securing his happiness in a future state. But numbers not considering that piety and virtue ought, according to the will of our Creator, to be the business of their whole life, somehow satisfy themselves with the gross mistake, that this work may be performed in a short period, and that they shall find leisure enough to attend to it some time or other before they die; that they can soon execute what will be sufficient to provide a good reception in heaven, and in the mean time see no cause why they should not give indulgence to their favourite lusts and passions. When their minds discourse to them, as Paul did to Felix, concerning *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come**, they may tremble
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* Acts xxiv. 25.

S. E. R. M.
III.

for a moment ; but by vain promises to repent and do better, and to obey these admonitions of conscience at *a more convenient season*, they suppress its remonstrances, and soon plunge themselves deeper in wickedness and folly. Thus erring from their pretended purpose, and continually straying farther from the path of virtue, they wander in all the crooked ways of vice. They sacrifice the best of their days, the active and vigorous part of their life to dissipation and folly ; reserving only the dregs of it for virtue and their duty ; as if the chief work of men could be well and properly performed, when they are enfeebled and worn out, both in mind and body, by intemperance and every wicked practice. Instead of *remembering*, they forget *their Creator in the days of youth*, and of mature age ; and defer all thought and care of obeying him, till they become disabled by bad habits, and unfit for any exertion.

Various are the ways which men have of deceiving themselves. Wilful, daring wickedness

ness may have *slain its thousands*, but self-deceit has cut off its *ten thousands*. Nor is there any deceit more common or more destructive, than a general indistinct resolution of turning from vice on some future occasion, or, what is vainly deemed some better opportunity. Deluded by such a vague purpose, the thoughtless, unhappy men freely indulge their favourite passions, without considering, that if now they have little relish for virtue, they will have far less, after their hearts, by this indulgence, have become more corrupted, and vice has become habitual to them. The truth is, that such persons never seriously and distinctly determine to correct the errors of their conduct, otherwise they would set about the doing of it immediately. Far from imitating the example of David, who, upon *considering his ways*, and discovering his deviations from rectitude, *made haste and delayed not to keep the commandments of God**, they never fix upon a certain time; but put off
executing

* Psal. cxix. 60.

S E R M.

III.

executing their purpose till some future season.

But who hath told thee, O man! that such a season shall be granted thee? or that, if it were, thy inclination to do thy duty would be better established? One should think, that no reflection would be more ready than That we are not sure of living till to-morrow. This indeed is in the mouths of all; but how little impresson it makes on their minds, their manners abundantly declare. Is it not possible my brother, that death may seize thee in the midst of thy sinful career, in the very act of criminal indulgence?—Where now are all thy hopes, thy false and deceitful resolutions of repentance? The season for it is gone, and nothing remains with thee but the bitter and remorseful fruits of thine own folly. How then is this misery to be avoided? Hear and follow the advice in the text, *Remember thy Creator, especially in the days of thy youth, ere the evil days come, or the years draw nigh when thou shalt say thou hast no pleasure in them.* A constant and just impresson of the
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presence of our Creator, will keep us mindful of the end for which he made us: It will also most effectually guard us against the fatal delusion of trusting that we are to find better opportunities, and our hearts better disposed for doing our duty, some time after the present.

S E R M.
III

2. The remembrance of our Creator, by keeping us mindful of the end for which He made us, must operate strongly upon our minds, and lead us to form an early and fixed plan of life and conduct, in order to reach that end. This will consequently guard us against the common error of youth, so prompt to gratify, without consideration, every desire that rises in the heart.

God made man for a certain end.—This is indeed the character of all the works of God: But betwixt man and the inferiour creatures, there is this remarkable difference, that whereas these cannot think for themselves, nor form any opinion concerning the end for which they were designed, but are led

VOL. I.

E

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S E R M.
III.

instinctively by the hand of their Maker to fulfil the intention of their being, man is made capable of discerning the purpose for which God created him, and of laying down the plan of his own conduct, with a view to accomplish it. God hath made him after his own image, assigned to him a portion of wisdom and understanding, and formed him to be a wife, forethinking, and prudent creature. Man therefore deviates from the end of his being, when he blindly and rashly complies with the solicitation of every desire that rises within him; for then all consistency of conduct is destroyed, then he forfeits the human character, and is degraded to the rank of the brutes, who follow implicitly the bent of every present inclination. This is indeed the law of their nature; but from man higher things are expected,—even a virtuous uniformity in all his actions. Yet we see numbers of men in the world who *remember not their Creator*, nor the end for which He made them, and who form no determined plan for attaining

attaining that end; but are distracted in their aims, and tossed about by temptations from pleasure, interest or ambition, just as their imagination is most affected by any of these at the time. Now they are eager in the chase after one object, now after another. To-day they are active, to-morrow, slothful and negligent, they love to indulge in ease, and to be free from care. Now anger drives them one way; then envy another, and disappointment a third. To-day they praise what they condemned before, and shun with disgust what perhaps yesterday they hunted after with the utmost earnestness.—Perhaps too, in the confusion of their thoughts, the beauty of Virtue may sometimes break in upon their minds, and raise some desire of possessing it. But this incidental glance of the excellence of virtue will be at best melancholy and short lived; and the pleasure arising from it will have a sad mixture of sorrow, owing to a consciousness that they are destitute of the qualities which they feel themselves constrained

S E R M.

III.

to admire; till, by degrees, even the regret for such a want vanishes entirely from their minds.

Such are they who, forgetting their Creator, walk without thought in the ways of their hearts, rejoicing, as if they only were free from restraint; while in fact they are wholly subjected to the most shameful and oppressive tyranny,—the tyranny of their own passions, which, being by nature fervile, if once elevated, and fixed in the seat of power, prove the most severe of all tyrants. How shameful a prostitution is this, of all the powers of the human soul? How mean and contemptible is such a character! It is an utter desertion of the character of a man;—it is as if the law of the human and brutish nature were the same. For such persons having no fear of God before their eyes, but being led and turned a thousand different ways, exhibit no marks of sound judgement, no efforts of the principle of virtue, any more than if they were destitute of reason altogether. To what
cause

cause can we ascribe this most shameful degradation and depravity of the human mind? To what? but to forgetfulness of God,—of his continual inspection of us, and the important end for which he made us, by the prosecution of which only we can escape folly, dissipation and vice.

3. The remembering of our Creator, by preserving and fixing our attention to his perfect will and authority, and to the chief end of our creation, will guard us against an habitual indulgence of any one predominant evil passion.

Before reason appears to have any considerable influence on the minds of men, passions generally get hold of them. Objects of sense are the first that strike us in our early days, command our attention, draw out our young desires, engross our love and care, and direct our aims and exertion. Pleasurable objects particularly draw all after them in youth, in a greater or less degree. In that rash unthinking age, nothing but what is gay, plea-

S E R M.

III

ing, and florid, can attract our regard. The first serious checks from reflection are treated as impertinent, and a deaf ear is turned to them; and not uncommonly the gratification of one prevailing passion soon becomes our chief object, unless Reason, supported by Religion and the *remembrance of our Creator*, assuming its proper office, take this predominant passion roundly to task, strictly examine the nature of its claim, strip it of its pretended right to authority, and subject it to just subordination and order. Frequently there is an early strife for chief command amongst our passions, the love of pleasure, of power, of wealth, and of applause. These sometimes maintain a long and violent struggle. Now one of them prevails, and carries the man along with it; by and by another succeeds, and in its turn commands him; till after much contending, one passion gains the victory, and then the whole man is subdued to a slavish compliance with its arbitrary will. Even Reason is made to stoop from

from its dignity, and to act as a slave and drudge for gratifying this insatiable master; for that which is strongest, must bear rule. Thus we find one man devoted to the pursuit of false pleasure, and the intemperate indulgence of his inclinations; another engrossed with the desire and care of accumulating wealth; and a third chiefly fond of applause and fame. Each of these places his happiness in the success of his favourite pursuit, bends all his endeavours, thought and care, determines all his dispositions, and orders his whole behaviour with a view to this end; for *where the treasure is, there will the heart be also*. Such persons are very different from the dissipated and changeable, formerly mentioned; but not much wiser. They are indeed more consistent, but not more worthy. For it is not enough that our conduct be consistent, and of a piece; the consistency must be altogether virtuous; and it is the office of reason, assisted, enlightened, and directed by *the remembering of our Creator*, to call our passions

S E R M.

III.

to early and strict account. For a while they may influence the heart and manners of unexperienced man; but when the mind attains maturity and strength, it is its proper business, by serious reflection, and the efficacy of religion, to examine the claims of every one of them, to strip them of their usurped power, and reduce them to their just and natural state of servitude, that they may no longer lay waste the soul, and pervert its conduct; but that being brought under due subjection, they may follow the directions of Reason and Conscience, their only rightful rulers. But instead of this, which *the remembrance of our Creator* teaches us to be the great duty and only good of man, what numbers give loose reins to those very passions!—never question their right to command, but basely give up to their lawless will, the privilege of Conscience, the only true guide of life,—the Divinity within them,—checking its remonstrances, and suppressing its salutary admonitions. When it reminds them of their duty to God;

God; "What is the Lord," they say in their hearts, "that we should obey him? What delight can we find in his service, which would retrench our pleasures, and lay us under intolerable restraint?" They see nothing comely in virtue, why it should be desired, their discernment being darkened by sin; and they imagine it to be good for man, to indulge his passions, and gratify his desires without reserve. Blind to truth and to goodness, how dost thou err, O man! in thy design to be happy! Blind to the future, thou see'st not the evils that hang over thee; nor thinkest of the days of darkness and misery, which are yet to come; when all thy boasted felicity, like a dream, shall vanish; when, with all thy folly full before thee, thou shalt find no place for repentance—no atonement, no cover for thy shame, nor any relief from thine anguish,—when *the evil days shall come, and the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say, "I have no pleasure in them."*

FROM

S E R M.
III.

FROM what has been said, it appears that *re-
membering our Creator* tends most effectually
to prevent us from delaying application to the
work of righteousness, keeps us on our guard
against disorderly and dissipated conduct, and
saves us from being enslaved by any predomi-
nant evil passion: And for this end it ope-
rates both as a monitor to what is right, and
a check and restraint upon whatever is wrong.
The most powerful, direct, and immediate
principles of righteous conduct in men are,
on the one hand, supreme love of righteousness,
on account of its worth, which prompts and
urges them habitually to adhere to it, despi-
sing the false joys and pretended excellence
of worldly objects; and on the other hand,
abhorrence of evil, on account of its baseness
and depravity: And what can fix these prin-
ciples in the heart, with such efficacy as the
remembrance of our Creator, who is the pattern
and source of all excellence, the righteous
Lawgiver and Judge of the world? Habitual
respect and attention to Him in these points
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of view preserve our esteem and love to righteousness, his best image, and animate us with fresh desire to be like Him, and to avoid whatever He disapproves, that is, all vice and folly.

S E R M
III

II. We have now to consider the import of the expressions, *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, "I have no pleasure in them."*

I. These words imply the infirmities which are the common companions of advanced years, and which disqualify men for any active or constant exertion. They likewise include the miserable effects of corrupt and vicious habits contracted from neglecting God, and abusing the precious season of youth and mature age. It is a fatal mistake, to imagine that the judgements of God are always put off till the end of our present life. Bad men are often overtaken by them, and made to taste of the fruits of their evil doings, long before they leave this world. Indeed, they always do

S E R M.

III.

do so in a greater or less degree. For what else but a state of misery can we deem their frequent displeasure with themselves, their slavish subjection to vicious passions, and inability to resist them, notwithstanding their own self-condemnation? Surely nothing is more destructive to real happiness. Neither pain nor poverty, nor undeserved reproach, nor any other evil of that kind, is so contradictory and hurtful to human nature, as vice; and shall we look upon bodily or external evils, as the cause of unavoidable misery, and not conclude sinful dispositions and habits to be much more so? What can opposite and violent desires, the uniform disappointments to which the wicked are subject, and the frequent severe reproaches of conscience produce, but real misery? What is all the boasted joy of the wicked, but restlessness and dissatisfaction at best? These are judgements from God, inflicted by the very passions; in gratifying which, bad men place all their joy.

From

From the dissimulation of the wicked, the misery of their hearts is not clearly seen; they can often throw a cover upon it, and assume a cheerful and pleased countenance, as if all was perfectly well with them; and many who behold them, are so foolish as to take this false appearance for reality, and to conclude that the description which we have given of the misery of vice, is but a dream, or mere fancy. They do not reflect, that a bad man, as far as lies in his power, will put on the appearance of being happy, even to deceive himself if possible,—to conceal from his own view the distraction that prevails in his heart; but particularly to deceive the world, and to prevent the show of his countenance from bearing witness to the state of his mind: Otherwise, the show of his countenance would betray not only his misery, but the wickedness which is the cause of it; it would publish to all the world, that he is a bad man, a truth which he wishes to conceal from others as long as possible,—and from himself too, if he could.

But

S E R M
III.

But woe is to him ! for *he has rewarded evil to himself* ; and even with his utmost art, and in his calmest hours, he is a stranger to that genuine peace, that undisturbed serenity of mind, which belongs all to virtue ; he is subject to frequent misgivings of soul, to fear and remorse ; and has an habitual aversion to turn his thoughts inward upon his own mind,—a strong indication that all is not with him there as it ought to be !

But if this be his case in a prosperous condition, what will be his situation, when adversity lays hold of him ?—when his thoughtless career is interrupted, when *the days of darkness*, which he is called to remember, and of reflection long suppressed, intrude upon him. Considering the changeable nature of all things in this world, he is a very foolish man indeed, who promises to himself continued and invariable ease, and flatters himself that he shall escape entirely from afflictions, when all around him are suffering in their turn. A vicious man, therefore,

S E R M.
III.

fore, must expect to take his share in the common fate of mankind. He ought to lay his account that adversity in one shape or other will attack him; and as by adversity men are led to consider, he will then be forced to look back on what he has been doing; he will suffer bitterly for consuming the days of his prosperity in vain and unworthy pursuits. The enjoyments and amusements, by indulging in which he used to forget his Creator, and his own duty,—these are no longer within his reach; and his inward deformity stands exposed to the light. He pines at the view, and becomes a complaining, peevish, helpless and pitiful creature. Even in the days of prosperity, such a man cannot forbear casting back frequent and wishful looks upon the days of greater innocence; saying with the deepest regret: “O! that I were, as in those
“ times past, when I was a stranger to dis-
“ quiet, to that fear and shame which now
“ haunt me, when I had no deep guilt to up-
“ braid myself with, no cause to appre-
“ hand

S E R M.
III.

“ hnd any discovery to my dishonour, no
“ reason to dread the severity of God’s judge-
“ ment, or the indignation of men.” But
alas! these happier days are gone for ever;
he cannot but remember the evil and the
folly of which he has been guilty. That
which is done, he cannot recal. Such re-
flections will sometimes break in upon his
more fortunate hours, and check and em-
bitter all his joy. But how much sharp-
er must these reflections prove in days of
darkness and affliction, when his wonted re-
sources have failed, when his mind, weaken-
ed by bad habits, feels an incapacity of over-
coming them, and gives way to despair of re-
covering what he has lost, by neglecting and
abusing the favourable and important season
of youth and of mature years; when *the re-
membering of his Creator* would have prevent-
ed all this misery.

2. If such a man live to old age, he shall
still feel more severely the weight of his past
folly, and find himself deserted by his false joys,
with

with nothing left to entertain him. His age is nothing but labour and weariness; he becomes a burden to himself and to all about him; and yet unhappy as he then must be, how distressing is it to see him forced, with the utmost reluctance, to think of leaving that state, wretched as it is, and greedily swallowing the loathsome dregs of a reproachful life!—possessing no self-respect or esteem, no firmness or security of soul, no hope—but tormented by a dread of something hereafter, more terrible than all he has yet known! How unlike this to the venerable age of an upright man! rich in virtue, full of honour and dignity, as well as of years; easy and cheerful in himself, and communicating ease and cheerfulness to all who converse with him; and yet, with all this peace of mind, not meanly fond of life, but, patient and resigned to God, waiting calmly for a call to leave this world, pleased either to stay or go, as shall seem good to the Father of all: animated by a lively faith in the Lord Jesus

S E R M.
III.

Christ, and resting his hope upon the effectual mediation of his Saviour. Thus he flourisheth even at the close of life, while the wicked pine and are miserable. The consciousness of a life well spent, and hope, its inseparable companion, are the only consolations of the aged. When a man becomes unfit for the business and pleasures of this world, nothing but such home entertainment, — nothing but the pleasing reflection on what is past, and the prospect of future happiness, which an approving conscience affords, can sustain the weight and weariness of old age. At that period, conscience will either acquit or condemn; it will either reward or punish; and if it cannot bear testimony, that in simplicity and uprightness we have passed our days, it will bear witness against us, and resign us over to dreadful vengeance; it will fill us not only with remorse for despising and disregarding its repeated remonstrances and admonitions, but with the most gloomy apprehensions of what awaits the wicked beyond

yond the grave. No spectacle can be more dismal than that of a human creature dying under the most grievous terrors; while his own mind passes a sentence of condemnation upon him, as an earnest of that more awful and public one to be pronounced by his all-knowing and almighty Judge.

One common cause of mens not *remembering their Creator*, nor obeying his will in their early and better days, is, as we formerly observed, the gross deception which they foster in their minds, that their death is a distant event, for which they shall have sufficient time to provide: So blind are they to what passes every day before their eyes,—the death of human creatures of every age, from infancy to the farthest limits that human life can reach, at which indeed very few arrive. Experience, one should imagine, might lead men to conclude, that death may probably soon remove them from the present state, and place them before the tribunal of the Almighty. Then an account will be required *of the deeds*

S E R M.
III

done in the body. Then they must answer such questions as these: "How have you improved your minds and your time? What good actions have you performed? What virtues have you brought along with you as a recommendation to the society of the righteous in heaven?" When thus examined, they must stand pale and trembling before their all-knowing Judge, and self-condemned on account of their own folly and depravity, now so clearly seen by themselves, and by all the world around them; with not a shadow of excuse to offer, nor any answer to make. Whither now has all their vain joy and confidence fled? Where is their boasting, That evil should not come near them? where their sanguine hopes of time and leisure to prepare for this awful day? Unutterable grief has now filled the place of their former joy; shame and confusion have succeeded in room of their vain confidence. Sore shall they be confounded on account of the idols they have chosen, and bitterly lament
and

and curse the deceitful passions to which they resigned their honour and their virtue. *As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the joy of the wicked and foolish**; it blazeth for a little, and is soon extinguished for ever. Where shall it be when God shall proclaim aloud: *Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you†.* How much better, O man! would it have been to have judged thyself in time, and from a conviction of the errors of thy ways, turned from them to God, and to the keeping of his laws, and so have happily escaped this dreadful judgement? But then it will be too late; then there will be no room for repentance, no ground of consolation; then shall thy

F 3

heart

* Eccl. vii. 6.

† Prov. i. 24.—27.

S E R M.
III.

heart be void of every comforting reflection ; —a dismal and melancholy desert, with not a single ray of light to enliven it. Thy soul shall remain without strength, without virtue, deprived of taste for every thing,—except what thou hast left behind thee, and canst not again enjoy ; thy only companions being deep anguish and regret for thy past delights,—never to return !—Such will be the days of darkness that await all *who remember not their Creator.*

S E R.

S E R M O N I V.

ON KEEPING THE HEART.

PROVERBS iv. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life.

THE depravity of mankind, and the contradiction of their conduct to the rules of righteousness, must not be ascribed entirely to natural and unavoidable frailty, but in a great measure to their own negligence and inattention ;—inattention, I mean, to their heart. By *the heart*, we are here to understand, in general, the Soul of man, the seat of our thoughts and affections, in opposition to the

S E R M.
IV.

S E R M.
IV.

external appearance and behaviour; and *to keep the heart*, is to guard against indulging any impure, improper, unreasonable, or unjust desires and affections; and, on the contrary, to encourage and cultivate sincerity, and all good dispositions. From natural constitution in some men, from unhappy education in others, and from original corruption, custom, company, and other circumstances in all men, vicious dispositions spring up, acquire strength by degrees, and, if not checked in their progress, obtain a fixed and habitual seat in the heart, from whence, with difficulty, they can be expelled. The Wise Man's admonition, therefore, is, That we keep a strict watch over our thoughts, but especially over our affections, so as to give encouragement to none but such as are every way just and proper. For this he assigns a very strong reason, That the heart is the immediate spring of our actions. ;—if it is pure, they will be pure; if it is foul and corrupted, they will be so likewise.

SUCH

SUCH is the subject now before us : In discoursing on which, I shall, *First*, Briefly illustrate the argument contained in the text : *Secondly* ; Shew the fatal consequence of inattention to the state of the heart ; and, *thirdly*, Point out the most proper method of *keeping the heart with all diligence*.

S E R M.
IV.

I. I AM to illustrate the argument furnished by the text for *keeping the heart with all diligence* ; namely, That out of it are the issues of life.

Our actions flow immediately from the thoughts, but more especially from the affections and dispositions of the heart. Thus saith our Lord, *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things ; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh**. This maxim is to be extended to all our actions. What a man chiefly values and loves he will pursue, and endeavour

* Matt. xii. 35. Luke vi. 45.

SERM.
IV.

endeavour to obtain ; what he is chiefly afraid of he will avoid and flee from. Whatever tends to obstruct his endeavours to obtain what his heart is set upon, he will hate and abhor ; and if the rights and interests of his fellow creatures be of the number of those obstructions, he not only will pay no regard to these, but, as far as it can be done with safety to himself, will, without hesitation, break through them in a degree proportioned to the violence of his own passion and favourite desire. In the same manner, he will conceive an aversion and hatred to whatever tends to expose him to that which is the chief object of his terror ; and if his duty, however important, has a tendency to involve him in what he dreads as the greatest evils, that duty will most certainly be neglected. Hence it appears that the strongest affection will always influence our conduct. As nothing can conquer one kind of love and attachment, but a stronger one of an opposite nature ; nor any thing conquer one kind of fear, but a stronger one of a contrary kind ;

kind; so no man can uniformly observe a course of action, which not only does not lead to the fulfilling of his wishes, but which may also often oblige him to sacrifice his heart's chief desire, and subject him to evils which his heart most abhors. An ambitious man is fond of power and distinction. It would be very vain, to expect from him a conduct tending to preserve the rights, and advance the interests of other men; when, as often happens, these rights and interests lie cross to his own principal object. In vain would you expect from a covetous man, a course of generous and charitable actions. Equally vain would it be to expect from a person attached to sensual pleasures, an uniform temperance, sobriety, and moderation; or from a proud man, a tender attention to the welfare of those below him, whom he scarce deigns to look at, or bestow a thought upon. *Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit,—saith our Lord, upon*
this

S E R M.
IV.

this very subject, subjoining afterwards what has been already quoted, that *a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil ; for of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaketh.* Just observation of the nature of the human mind, and our own frequent experience, as well as this express declaration of God's word, join to convince us of the intimate connection betwixt our actions and the dispositions and affections of our hearts. Men, in general, have an impression of the truth of this, and of the excellence of a good heart, which, when they ascribe to any man, they mean to bestow on him the highest praise ; and the worst thing that can be said of a human creature, is, that " his heart is bad." From such a person, no good conduct is expected ; and all others are upon their guard against him.

Thus it appears, that the actions of mankind proceed from the dispositions of the heart,

heart, and always partake of the nature of that fountain from which they flow. Hence the necessity of *keeping the heart with all diligence*. It is a fatal mistake, to imagine that any thing but a right and well kept heart, can produce uniformly righteous actions.—But this diligence, or watchful attention, will appear the more necessary, if we consider,—

S E R M.
IV.

II. THE fatal consequence which ensues from negligence with respect to the keeping of the heart.

Corruption often steals into the heart and produces irregularity of conduct, merely from the want of attention. Bad actions do not always proceed from fixed bad dispositions, but, in many men, from a degree of indolence and carelessness which hinders them from observing the evil they are doing. No man becomes greatly wicked or completely hardened at once. This situation is brought on by degrees, by rashly consenting to one sin after another, enticed often by deceitful appearances ;

S E R M.
IV.

ces; till at last the man is completely infatuated, and loses the power to correct his conduct and amend his heart. Small transgressions, which are generally the beginning of sin, men are apt to look on as of little moment, and what they may abstain from at pleasure. Yet, unless they quickly endeavour to exclude the beginnings of corruption from their hearts, they may be assured, that their degeneracy will increase with accelerated speed, till ruin itself ensues. During the progress of vice in his heart, a man indeed will sometimes be roused by remorse; especially when he feels the weight of pollution oppressing his soul: And happy were it for him, if such alarms of conscience would excite in him a complete aversion to all iniquity, and induce him for the future to guard his heart with diligence. Too frequently, however, they will be found to have a different effect, by leading the offender to endeavour to palliate and excuse the bad actions to himself. When this is the case, instead of endeavouring to amend

amend for his conduct,—instead of trying to fortify his heart against the future intrusions of wickedness, he musters up circumstances, which, he flatters himself, greatly extenuate his faults; and while he endeavours thus to quiet the remonstrances of his own mind, he is studious likewise to conceal his vices from the world. When a man is thus disposed to seek for excuses, he will soon find them; and such is the deceitfulness of sin, that the wicked action he has done soon represents itself as a more harmless thing than his conscience at first pronounced it; and if he has succeeded in concealing it from the world, and his worldly concerns have not suffered by it, he then allows his thoughts to dwell only on the pleasure, or profit of the action. While thus successful in disguising and excusing it to himself, sin begins to appear to his deluded fancy in an agreeable light; for what he has so strong an inclination to adhere to, his own imagination will not

S E R M.

IV.

not fail to paint in the most alluring colours.

This is a most fatal method of proceeding, being quite the reverse of keeping the heart with diligence. It is even a facilitating the admission of all corruption there. For in this state of the mind, the next step will be some new sinful indulgence; and when a man's heart is thus unhappily deceived and captivated, and while he is, at the same time, perhaps, surrounded with the temptations of vicious companions, can it be thought surprising, that he should soon fall into a second sin, and from that into many worse? A man thus caught in the snares of vice, in consequence of a fatal inattention to the keeping of his heart, may now and then still feel an inclination to shake them off; the checks and remonstrances of conscience may yet at times rouse some desire of this kind; but as from partial and deceitful views he has learnt the art of silencing these, they are gradually weakened, and little attention is paid to them.

Thus

Thus, while aversion to sin gradually decreases, and fondness for the pleasures and profits of it grows stronger, the sinner's progress from one vice to another becomes at last rapid and overbearing. He is carried down the stream of wickedness, sometimes indeed alarmed by the guilt of his sins, but without the power of resisting them ; at other times, with little thought and reflection, hurried on by his passions, which have got the complete ascendancy over his heart and have at last become his absolute masters. When Reason, the head of our nature, lies thus overpowered, and when passions command, then are we slaves indeed ! As any nation may be said to have lost its liberty when the commands of those who have a right to govern are destroyed, and an unlawful authority is usurped by any part of the people over the whole ; so, in this sense, the sinful heart is subject to the basest servitude. The reasonable principle, with its attendants, conscience and reflection, have, through negligence, been allowed to

SECT. III.

be excluded from their throne in our hearts, while a lawless rabble of inferiour appetites and passions have ascended into their place. The soul, instead of hearkening to the equal and consistent laws of reason, is now hurried different ways by the loud and impatient calls of a thousand contradictory passions, by which it may be said to be cantoned out, as by so many ferocious and independent masters, who alternately lay it waste by their fierce incursions, and often turn their arms against each other.

To prevent this melancholy situation, it is of great importance to take heed how one vicious indulgence admitted into the heart leads on to another. This progress from ill to worse, is far too little attended to; and many will not give credit to its reality, till the miserable state of their own hearts become a sad example of its fatal effects. Before vice has taken possession of the heart, should it be suggested to a man, whose remissness and want of thought have allowed him, in a small-

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er degree, to gratify some sinful passions, That if he did not desist—that if he did not use all diligence in keeping the heart, he might at length become so depraved as to commit very gross iniquities, such as he would at present shrink from with horror; he would answer readily and with indignation, *‘What! am I a dog, that I should do such things? *’*

So little do men know of themselves! But experience informs us, what heinous crimes they are capable of committing, through long practice in vice, owing to original negligence in the keeping of their hearts. When a man is thus arrived at such extreme depravity, no correction moves him, advice is thrown away on him, he spurns at his monitors, and laughs to scorn those who would reclaim him; he despises and rejects the only means of his recovery; for all thought and reflection are purposely shut out as impertinent intruders on his peace.—Nay more: When a man is accustomed to wickedness, when his heart is

G 2 exceedingly

* 2 Kings viii. 13. See also p. 245 of this Vol.

S E R M.
IV.

exceedingly depraved, it is common to find him eager to make profelytes, and to render others as bad as himself. This is a common inclination in a bad man, who wishes that, if possible, his crimes may be concealed in the crowd; and to have many like himself is a source of some ease to his mind, which would be more disturbed if he were singly wicked. The more converts he can make, the more is he confirmed in his vicious practices. They prove strong allies to sin tyrannizing in his heart. Thus, a man's negligence in the keeping of his own heart, comes to be the cause even of throwing others off their guard, and the origin of corruption in *their* hearts also.

But sin, by its deceitful and insinuating nature, is found not only to pervert the affections of the heart, when a man is off his guard, but even the judgement and understanding, so as to cause him to mistake good for evil, and evil for good; to call darkness light, and light darkness;—to approve and condemn

condemn directly contrary to what is just and true. So long as the heart is good, it comprehends in it a sound judgement and a clear discernment of true excellence. As there is an immediate connection between the dispositions of the heart, and the actions of our lives, so is there between the judgements we form concerning good and evil and these dispositions of the heart. But sinful passions throw such a cloud over the mind, and involve it in such darkness, that it cannot judge rightly of its actions; it sees them through a false medium, by which a man is misled, so as not only to approve, but to boast of base and unworthy deeds. While the judgement of a man's mind remains clear and sound, and conscience inspects and watches diligently over his heart and conduct, his virtue is safe. For though these may be occasionally overborne, and passions gain a temporary triumph, yet as they still retain their vigour, they will soon repel the foe, and discharge their office with more attention and better

S E R M.
IV.

success than ever. But when conscience no longer performs its office, when the heart is enslaved to bad habits, and the judgement is so depraved as to be incapable of correcting them, what hopes remain of that man? whose first awakening from a state of blind and thoughtless security may be the voice of God within him pronouncing his unworthiness and final condemnation! Since then it appears that all this proceeds from mens allowing sin, by criminal negligence, to corrupt and harden the heart, are we not all loudly called upon to *keep the heart with unremitted diligence*? And in order to enable us the more successfully to obey this call, I now proceed—

III. To point out a method, by the diligent use of which we may, with that Divine aid we have reason to expect in so worthy an exertion, *keep our hearts* in the best manner.

1. When, by attention, we discover any wrong inclination prompting us to action, the rule of keeping the heart requires us instantly

to

to stop, and refuse compliance, whatever effort it may cost us. As it is by repeated indulgence that wrong inclinations become fixed habits and dispositions of the heart; so it is by repeated refusals to comply with them that they must be driven from their seat, and their power and influence be dissolved:—When any wrong inclination is discovered, it must, I say, be instantly rejected. Doubt and hesitation, in a plain case, are dangerous, and commonly fatal to our virtue. Our safety lies in an absolute and instantaneous refusal to gratify such inclinations, whenever they are perceived: And it is to be observed, that vicious inclinations, though thus once and again repressed, will continue to rise, upon renewed provocation and temptation, like enemies accustomed to victory, who, though defeated, will often return to the charge, till their force be quite spent. The more firmly and frequently these wrong inclinations are resisted, they become less and less formidable, till their assaults at last lose their force entirely; and

S E R M.

IV.

thus the heart is corrected and kept pure. In order to *keep the heart* then, the first thing to be learned, is the power and habit of abstaining from evil;—of absolutely rejecting what is plainly evil, and of suspending our consent to what has the least appearance of evil. In this manner every bad inclination of the heart is to be treated, *Resist the devil*, saith the Apostle James, *and he will flee from you* *. Even so resist all bad inclinations, suggested, either by the devil, or the corruption of your own hearts, and they also will vanish.

2. Our success will be the more speedy and effectual, if while we thus resist wrong inclinations, we apply diligently to cultivate and confirm such dispositions as are of an opposite and contrary character. Thus, if to our care to suppress every inclination to injure our neighbours, we join an attention to promote their interest and welfare on every opportunity that occurs, a disposition to do wrong, thus doubly borne down, must give way.

For

* James iv. 7.

For instance; if we discover a violent propensity to selfishness, or sordid attention to our own interest, likely to prevail within us, and leading us to the commission of unfair and unwarrantable deeds; such an inclination will be most effectually suppressed, not merely by abstaining from a surreptitious invasion of the property of other men, but by some positive acts of true generosity.

In the same way; if, while we resist an inclination or habit of judging rashly and severely of our neighbour, we are not satisfied with merely abstaining from so doing, but set ourselves to interpret his actions with candour, malignity will be gradually eradicated from the heart, and rash judging will find no room there; envy and malice will fly away, and true Christian charity supply their place.

Farther: If while we guard against intemperance and excess, by which we manifestly abuse the gifts of God, we are likewise careful to cultivate gratitude to the Almighty; this principle will continually remind us of his

S E R M.
IV.

his intention in bestowing these gifts; and not only prompt us to endeavour, but animate us with power to succeed in our endeavours, to maintain the full command of such vicious inclinations, and to restrain them within those bounds of propriety and moderation which God has prescribed.

3. To those virtuous endeavours, we must join the utmost circumspection with regard to the company we keep. There is no circumstance which requires attention more than the choice of our company. It is almost impossible to frequent the company of dissolute and corrupt men, without becoming, sooner or later, converts to their vices. Nothing indeed has a more forbidding appearance than vice, when stripped of all disguise; but such a view of it is not always to be had. It has, as we have already showed, a thousand ways of insinuating itself into our minds; it can even make itself amiable under the appearance of virtue; and in this particular instance, it betrays us under the mask of friendship. We
are

are apt to imagine that there is something agreeable in the vices of those whom we love. It is surely a most unhappy thing for any person to contract a strong affection for one who is abandoned to the practice of any vice. Where this affection takes place, it commonly produces a similitude of manners, which is seldom on the side of virtue. We ought therefore to shun the company of all such associates; and, on the contrary, cultivate the friendship of good and virtuous men, such as by their conversation, by their wise and honest advice, assistance, encouragement, and example, may correct our faults, lessen our difficulties, and animate us to the constant and unremitted practice of our duty.

4. Besides this, we ought to retire from the bustle and tumult of human affairs; and dedicate frequent intervals of our time to the sacred exercise of recollection and self-examination; and when we have composed our thoughts, and called in our wandering imaginations, by an awful impression of the immediate

S E R M.
IV.

mediate presence of God, we should turn our attention inwards, and talk with our own hearts.—“What am I? Whence do I come?
“For what end was I sent into this world?
“Am I not a creature of the Most High?
“Has he not dignified me with a thinking
“and immortal soul, and endowed me with
“a capacity for relishing the divine and elevated satisfactions of a spiritual world?
“Shall then the vain, the temporary and unsatisfactory enjoyments of the present state engross the attention and desire of my heart, formed for aspiring to immortality and the glory of virtue? Did God create me with such mental powers, for a purpose so ill suited to them? and is such the conduct he expects at my hand? Affuredly not. Let me then renounce such depravity for ever, and perform the work which God has assigned to me; watching against every temptation to seduce me from it.
“Does not the omniscient eye of God ever behold me? Is He not this very moment
“observing

“ observing these secret whisperings of my
“ soul?—Behold, O God! I stand in thy pre-
“ sence, in the midst of infinite light! Thou
“ besettest me behind and before. Darkness
“ cannot hide from Thee. All my minutest
“ actions and most secret thoughts are naked
“ and open to thy all-searching eye!”—By
such recollection repeated from time to time,
and by frequently pondering upon the state of
our hearts, we may counteract, to admirable
purpose, the power and deceitfulness of sin,
and make daily proficiency in religion and
virtue. By this self-communing we may also
learn to estimate life justly, and discern clearly
the real and intrinsic value of all its objects,
so as not to be imposed upon by the false ap-
pearances they often assume. So likewise shall
we acquire, and fix deep in our minds, a just
notion of the proper character of a man, agree-
ably to which we should always act; and
this proper character being habitually present
to our minds, will prove a strong incitement
to righteous actions. The man who thinks
properly of his rank and end in this world,
and

S E R M.
IV.

and of the character which he ought to sustain in it, will be inspired by a generous aversion and contempt of vice and every low gratification. Nothing tends more to give one a just sense of the character he ought to cultivate, than to turn his attention inwards, and frequently talk with his own heart. Such a habit will keep his eyes from being dazzled by ambition, or distorted with envy. It will represent to him that wealth and pleasure are very vain, compared with the profession of piety and virtue; and far below the just aim of an immortal spirit.

5. *Lastly:* When we are required to keep our hearts, the great object in view is to preserve all good dispositions in full vigour, not only because they are the springs of human actions, an argument already illustrated, but because of their own excellence; and this can be done only by taking every occasion of acting according to their dictates, and by rejecting with firmness and indignation, all inclinations of a contrary nature. In order to this, diligence is absolutely necessary. We cannot

cannot secure the heart from corruption, without using diligence,—without shaking off that indolence, which makes us an easy prey to temptations. We must maintain a jealousy over ourselves, which will be found the best guard of our purity and integrity, till these qualities are established in our heart, and form our character. Then, and not till then, we may entertain confidence in it, and act with a dignity and freedom of spirit peculiar to the children of God,—with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free.

FROM what has been said, let us all be persuaded to maintain this diligence and watchful attention. Diligence is the nurse of our best affections; she alone can guard them in their infancy; her care only can rear them up to maturity, by encouraging and accustoming them to proper and habitual exercise; her watchful eye guards them against the attacks of hostile passions; she is neither deterred by the most threatening appearance

S E R M.
IV.

pearance these can assume, nor deceived by the most flattering and insinuating arts they can employ. To her aid she constantly solicits the Spirit of God. Prayer is her perpetual companion; and having such an assistant, her labours prove successful. This Diligence may be considered, as the same with that Wisdom, of which the Wise Man thus speaks: *Get wisdom, and forget her not; forsake her not and she shall preserve thee; love her and she shall keep thee; she shall lead thee in the right path. When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble. Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her* *. Such being the virtue of Diligence, supported by Prayer, her Divine attendant, let us by an unremitting use of both, strive to grow in grace,—in every holy and righteous disposition, and thus keep our hearts in the most effectual manner.

S E R.

* Prov. iv. 4. &c.

S E R M O N V.

ON THE WRETCHED CONDITION OF WICKED MEN.

JOB XX. 12, 13, 14.

*Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
though he hide it under his tongue; though
he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it
still within his mouth; yet his meat in his
bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps with-
in him.*

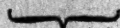
THESE are the words of Zophar, one of
Job's friends, which, though unjustly
directed to that good man, expresses a truth of
the last importance; and well deserving our
Vol. I. H most

S E R M.

V.

S E R M.

V.



most serious attention : That though the wicked may, for a season, rejoice in possessions viciously obtained, and in gratifications sinfully indulged ; tenaciously adhering to them, and deeming themselves very happy in the enjoyment ; yet when the hour of reflection comes,—and come it will, sooner or later,—they shall find their joy converted into sorrow and bitterness ;—*their meat in their bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within them.*

All errors in conduct, all folly and wickedness may be said in a great measure to flow originally from blameable ignorance, and mistaken judgement. Men are influenced by their own views of happiness ; and when these are false and erroneous, their actions will partake of the same nature. If then we would not, through negligence, miss our aim, and forfeit true happiness, we must carefully avoid being misled by false and deceitful appearances ; we must beware of grasping at the shadow instead of the substance. Happiness is not to be found in every road into
which

which fancy, humour or passion may lead us; but is fixed to one upright and virtuous course. Every other course leads to shame and misery. It concerns us therefore, frequently to meditate on this inseparable connection between virtue and happiness,—to reflect on the different characters, different conditions, and very different ends of good and bad men; that we may not be deceived and betrayed, in a world where so many things tend to impose upon us; that a full conviction of the happiness of true virtue, and the misery of wickedness may be our security against such deception. For this reason, we find in holy writ so many descriptions of the worth and happiness of the righteous, and of the shameful and wretched state of the wicked. Among these, the words of the text lead our thoughts to the consideration of the miserable condition of wicked men, who, though for a while they may satisfy themselves with the treacherous joys of vice, not discerning the concealed sting which these have

S E R M.
V.

lodged in their hearts, shall yet find the resultful and lasting sorrow. *Though wickedness be sweet in their mouth, though they hide it under their tongue; though they spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within their mouth; yet their meat in their bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within them.*

FROM these words, we shall now take occasion to give some idea of that bitterness and misery which wickedness produces; and, for conducting our meditations more distinctly on this important subject, shall consider bad men in these three points of view: *First*, As they are affected towards God; *secondly*, Towards their fellow creatures; and *thirdly*, Towards themselves.

I. As to the manner in which bad men are affected towards God.

The soul of man is a kind of emanation from the Divine Nature, being originally endowed with a portion of the Divine Image,

of

of which it was the intention of our Creator we should make the proper improvement. Men were appointed by the Almighty to be fellow-workers with Himself, in promoting the order and happiness of the world; so high and glorious was their destination, so eminent their rank in the universe: And, since their fall and corruption, they are created anew to this high office, and restored to this dignity by Christ Jesus. It is incumbent then upon every man to cultivate his spiritual powers, in order to establish in himself a fixed character of righteousness. Every man has his own mind, as a talent entrusted to his care and improvement. This he ought to furnish and adorn with all virtue. The peace and good order of this private state he is to establish and defend, that he may be duly qualified to advance the good order, peace and happiness of mankind; and thus most effectually promote the glory of God. This is the business of man; nor is he left without sufficient assistance to execute it, and the highest encour-

S E R M.

V.

agement to apply to it, seeing God has declared Himself the Father, Protector and Friend of all who thus concur with his views, and comply with his will. Man is not left to obtain the knowledge of this will from conjecture. God has afforded him full and plain intimations of it. By the Divine appointment, his own mind is ever giving him intimations, and calling him to the performance of it. By the nature which God has given us, *we are*, saith the Apostle Paul, *a law to ourselves**; and we have the additional law of Christ, by which the truth is pointed out to us. Truth of every kind, when clearly discerned, fills the soul with the highest satisfaction; and of all truth, that which is of a moral nature, of which the divine perfections are the standard, communicates by far the completest joy. Is there any thing which equally captivates the heart, which equally excites admiration and esteem, and love and affectionate praise, as an upright and generous

* Rom. ii. 14.

generous character? How much then must we be affected with the contemplation of all excellence joined together in the Divine Nature? This is a subject on which the righteous soul expatiates with inexpressible pleasure. The righteous man, with unreserved confidence, reposes on the wisdom and goodness of the Father of mankind. He is conscious of a friendship betwixt his own mind and the bountiful Author of all, to a nearer union with whom the continual aspirations of his soul are directed. In consequence of his respectful affection and veneration for the great Author of the world, he feels an interest in the whole, and claims a relation to the whole. He lives in full security under the Divine government; considering every thing as friendly to him in a world which is arranged by the all-perfect God, of whom he cannot think otherwise than as the Father and Friend of all, especially of the upright.

But how different is the scene which a wicked man prepares for himself? Truth, on

S E R M.

V.

its own account, has to him no charms; gross objects possess his heart, and command his desires; and how dismal must his soul be when, roused to a sense of his condition, he finds himself incapable of any pleasure from the contemplation of the highest perfection of the wisdom and goodness of the Most High God! when his meditations on God are not sweet, but bitter and tormenting to his soul. For how has the bad man answered the end, and fulfilled the purpose of his being? Has he acted up to the character of a fellow worker with God? has he contributed as far as in him lay to the happiness of the world? has he taken care to improve his mind and heart, and make them the seat of integrity and kind affection? Alas! he has done just the reverse. He has opposed the intention of his Maker, run counter to the chief purpose of his own being, and as far as the influence of his actions could reach, has corrupted and destroyed the beautiful works, and introduced confusion and misery into the family,

S E R M.

V.

family, of God: With what confidence then can he raise his thoughts to the supreme Lord of the Universe? What has he to expect from the Almighty, against whom he has rebelled, not only by deserting the post assigned to him; not only by neglecting, but by acting directly contrary to the Divine will? He has assumed to himself a licence of gratifying his own depraved inclinations and passions, in opposition to the eternal laws of righteousness, the laws of God Himself; he has transgressed the bounds set to him by his Maker, resigned basely his claim to an intelligent and moral nature, given up the noble privilege of his birthright, as a son of the Most High, and, by his manners, associated with the herd of brute and senseless animals, or with the malicious and desperate spirits of darkness. What a foul stain has he thus brought upon his soul! and what bitterness must not this produce, when he is roused to a sense of it! Wicked men indeed may long shut up their minds from this mortifying reflection;—

S E R M.
V.
—

fection;—from discerning the pollution in which they are involved. By dwelling only upon their prosperity,—on the success of their projects, the means of which success they clothe with the names of superior wisdom and dexterity, and by indulging in one gratification after another, they conceal their real character from their own observation, and thus have some kind of enjoyment;—broken however and interrupted by doubts and suspicions, which they immediately attempt to dismiss. Such enjoyment, even while it continues, has no other support than deceit and self-delusion. But no disguise can last always. The truth will break forth at last;—and then farewell to all their dreams of happiness! When light is thus let in upon their minds, when the clouds are dispelled which concealed from their view both their Maker and their own character, when they are led to reflect on the light they must appear in to their Creator, when they reflect that, during the time they deceived and flattered themselves

selves in their iniquities, the corruption of their heart was naked and open to his inspection;—how terrible must the thought be, that God looks on them as wretches wholly unworthy, and now scarce capable, of his favour! What oppressive sorrow must weigh down their souls, when they reflect that they appear to their all-wise Creator as creatures of the basest spirit!—who, with honour and virtue set before them, offered to their acceptance, and often calling on them to take possession, chose for their portion what could produce nothing but shame and dishonour; who, invited to share in the favour and friendship of God, *had Him not in all their thoughts*; who still bear the name of men, but are conscious that the true character of a man is gone, that *the crown of a man is fallen from their head*, and all the godlike dispositions of a man, such as their Maker meant them to possess, are banished from their heart. —Go on thus, O foolish and thoughtless men! dishonouring and destroying your own souls!

So

S E R M.

V.

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So

S E R M.

V

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So shall you render your reconciliation with God still more impracticable; so shall your awakened souls discover you to be wretched outcasts from his love and favour, and reduce you in the depth of despair to call on the mountains to cover you, and hide your shame! —But vain man! canst thou conceal thyself from the Almighty? Whither canst thou fly beyond the reach of his arm? Canst thou shut the eyes of thine own mind, or throw an impenetrable cloud over thy shameful and wretched heart? No. Thine eyes shall be ever open to thy dishonour; thou shalt sharply feel how evil and bitter a thing it is to forsake the living God, and have no fear of him within thy heart.

II. LET US, in the next place, consider the state of wicked men, in consequence of the manner in which they are affected to their fellow creatures.

There is nothing more evident than that man was not made for himself only, but for his

his brethren also. He was not created to be a single and solitary being, but a part of a whole,—a member of a society of his own kind, to which his best affections lean, and in whose welfare they are deeply interested. The world in general, his country, his friends, and all around him, claim a share of his good will and hearty affection. It is this natural affection, this mutual good will, implanted by God in the human heart, which supports and preserves that measure of happiness with which mankind are acquainted. It is this good will which gives the chief relish to all the pleasures of life, and forms by far their strongest attraction. It is the communication of delight to others, in order that they may share it with us, which forms our greatest joy. On the other hand, do we not find a selfish man universally deemed, not only a despicable and worthless, but a solitary and miserable creature? Friendly and kind affections are not only in themselves of a joy-ful

S E R M.

V.

ful nature, but always attended with the sense of meriting the reciprocal love and good will of our fellow creatures. He whose life is an uniform and continued expression of love to mankind, (besides the high satisfaction which results from his consciousness of acting agreeably to his own nature, and to the will of God,) enjoys a great accession of pleasure, from reflecting that he deserves the benevolence of other men, and from his consciousness that he is the object of the kind affection of those who know him best, and especially of the wisest and the worthiest. Little, indeed, are most men acquainted with such pleasures, because they bestow too little application, to strengthen their good affections, the only source from which these pleasures can flow. But imagination cannot form an idea of any satisfaction superior, or even equal to what the man enjoys, who possesses a just and affectionate heart. Conscious of sharing the friendship of God, and of all good men, and, by his sympathy, making his neighbour's happiness

pinels his own, fear, shame, or disquiet can find no access to his mind.

S E R M
V.

But gracious God ! what a different scene does the heart of a wicked man present to us ? He lives among men solely for the purpose of gratifying some selfish passion ; for the sake of which, all sacred ties are dissolved. He has broken the most sacred bond of love, which united him with his fellow creatures ; and instead of promoting, he is continually disturbing, their welfare. Instead of bringing his portion of good will, and adding to the common stock of love and joy, he has, by force, intruded his unjust, unfocial, and destructive passions. A base and faithless deserter of the common interest of mankind, he, by his iniquities, as by constant invasions, shakes and disturbs their tranquillity. In this manner he acts, and thus, not only rouses the indignation of those whom he immediately injures, but of all who are the witnesses of his iniquity. He is justly considered as a common enemy. From what source then can joy flow into

S E R M.

V.

into the heart of such a man as this!—a man who has no share in the love of his fellow creatures, and is conscious he deserves none. If the consciousness of loving mankind, and of deserving mutual love from them, be the chief joy of a man considered as a member of human society, what must his feelings be, who neither loves, nor thinks he is beloved by them?—who considers himself as the object of their just aversion and hatred? There may be some who, unacquainted with his real character, still entertain a regard for him; yet how painful must be the reflection!—and how can he avoid the reflection?—that sooner or later he shall appear to all in his true colours, and become the wretched object of universal and deserved indignation, contempt, and hatred! Though for a time a bad man may suppress these thoughts, and, in the midst of his possessions and false pleasures, flatter himself that thus it shall continue with him; yet the moment he allows himself to reflect, he must see the vanity of this expectation. The

natural

natural sentiments of the human mind cannot be always kept down; they will rise, expose the wickedness of his heart clearly to his own view, and torment him with the fear of having his shameful character fully displayed. Then shall he feel himself solitary and disconsolate, in the midst of crowded society. Of him it may be said, that as he has not in him the affections of a brother, neither has he one brother among the sons of men. He dwells among men, without contributing to the common felicity, or partaking of it. He cannot say to himself,—“ That he “ has a friend in heaven, or upon earth, or “ deserves to have one.” These are reflections overwhelming to the soul; and reduce a man to a state so very miserable, as to exceed the conception of all who are not abandoned as he is. Such extremity of wretchedness, indeed, belongs only to those who are greatly wicked; but let us remember, that, in as far as any man is wicked, in so far is he wretched;

S E R M.

V.



his misery ever bearing an exact proportion to the depravity of his heart.

III. In the third and last place: To discern more clearly the misery that is the portion of a wicked man, let us consider him as he is affected towards himself.

From what has been said it appears that, when a wicked man is brought to think seriously of his conduct, and of the light in which he must appear to his Maker and his fellow creatures, he shall find himself reduced to the most forlorn and destitute condition; without any share in the favour of God who rules the world in righteousness, or in the love, esteem, and friendship of men, amongst whom he must live, and with whom he must have daily intercourse. In this deplorable situation, if he could retire within himself, and enjoy his own esteem and regard, this might afford some degree of consolation,—some kind of relief. But such a supposition cannot be made; the sentiments of his own mind concerning himself, perfectly

perfectly accord with those of other men, and with the judgements of the Almighty. It is, indeed, the judgements of a man's own conscience, that lead him to consider those of the Almighty, and of his fellow creatures. They cannot be separated, neither do they ever contradict each other. *Beloved*, faith the Apostle John*, *if our heart condemn us, God, who is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, will not acquit us.* Wicked men, therefore, who feel themselves outcasts from God and from good men, and deprived of the friendship of both, have, in truth, no friendship for themselves, no self-esteem, and consequently no peace and tranquillity of mind. They have destroyed the very foundation on which alone self-esteem can stand, even the approbation of their own conscience. So far from being the objects of self-esteem, their conduct tends directly to render them the objects of their own unrelenting reproach, and of their own disgust and

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* 1 John iii. 20.

S E R M.
V.

aversion. When a wicked man is brought to recollect the opportunities he has neglected, of acquiring true wisdom, and of exercising beneficence, for which his Maker intended him ;—when he recollects his base ingratitude to God, for all the benefits and mercies, and all the means of improvement bestowed on him, and his own cold indifference and unconcern about the welfare of his fellow creatures, which he is sensible ought to be dear to him ; much more when his heart reminds him of the fraud and deceit, and injustice ; or the inhumanity, cruelty, and oppression, of which he has been guilty ;—when conscience sets such a train of vices full in his view ;—when his heart tells him he has been a fool, as well as a villain ;—say, my brethren, what respect, love, or esteem can such a being have for himself ? What, but shame, terror, and bitter remorse, can be his portion ? And where these prevail, peace, tranquillity, and satisfaction, must be utter strangers. So true is it that *there is no peace*

to the wicked *. *His own wickedness doth correct him, and his own backslidings reprove him* †.

To render such a man very miserable, it is not absolutely requisite that he should be punished by men. His own heart will at last take full vengeance on him. Neither is it requisite that he should be subjected to bodily pain, sickness, poverty, or other misfortunes. What he feels from conscience, is infinitely more intolerable than all the external ills of life accumulated. But when these ills also do befall him;—when poverty or pain, or public contempt, and reproach and disgrace, have overtaken him; especially when these are evidently the bitter fruits of his own misdeeds;—when he must say, “All this have I brought upon myself.” Then shall he be forced to cry out, “Wretched man that I am, what shall deliver me from this load of sin and shame?” *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities*;—the spirit that is conscious

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* Isa. xlviii. 22.

† Jer. ii. 19.

S E R M

V.

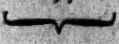
scious of innocence and integrity,—that is free from remorse, and is at peace within itself, that trusts in the mercy and favour of God, and enjoys the love and esteem of mankind,—such a spirit will bear the ills and misfortunes of life, with invincible patience, and high satisfaction in itself; but *a wounded spirit*,—a spirit smote by remorse and self condemnation, *who can bear* * ?

If, in the management of worldly affairs, a man shall suffer and bring distress on himself by his inattention, imprudence, or extravagance, although he cannot accuse himself of fraud, injustice, or cruelty; even in this case his spirit will be sore wounded, and ill qualified to bear the misfortunes in which he is thus involved; the sense of his own imprudence will pierce his heart with sharp regret and sorrow. But if in his misfortunes he has also involved others altogether innocent, if he has involved friends who trusted him, an affectionate parent of whom he was the boast and

* Prov. xviii. 14.

and the joy,—the wife of his bosom, and the children whom he fondly loved, and who looked up to him as their protector and certain refuge in all situations, their defender from distress, and comforter under it,—what must his feelings be when, instead of answering their just expectations, he has proved the cause of all their sorrow?—How highly must his own sorrow be aggravated, and how sharp must be the anguish of his soul!

If such are the effects of conscious imprudence and thoughtless extravagance, where there is no mixture of deliberate iniquity, how much more dreadful must be the effects of a consciousness of deceit or violence, or dishonesty and oppression?—These vices, like so many tyrants, reduce the man to a state of servitude that must render him both contemptible and detestable in his own eyes. And can he be sensible of this hard bondage, without groaning under it?—Sometimes it will rouse a wish, a desire and half purpose to shake off the yoke; but this wish soon va-

S E R M.
V.


nisheſ; his tyrannical paſſions reſume their wonted power, and rivet his chains ſtill cloſer. At intervals, he feels their full weight; but through habit he is unable, and, what is worſe, unwilling, to ſtruggle for liberty. He often curſes his own folly, often reproaches himſelf for his impiety, iniquity, and vicious exceſſes. In this ſtate of mind, he forms haſty reſolutions to change his whole conduct for the future; but ſo weak is his mind, through long indulgence in vice, and ſo abſolute the ſlavery in which he is held, that his good reſolutions are quickly forgotten; and to free himſelf from the pain of remorse and an upbraiding conſcience, he haſtily throws himſelf back into his uſual habits of iniquity, hoping to drown the ſtill voice of conſcience amidſt the noiſe, clamour, and contention of his paſſions. Thus, in order to eſcape the preſent pain of remorse, he lays the foundation of his future miſery more deep and ſtrong. For at laſt, all the arts he uſed for quieting his conſcience, all the apologies,

logies, excuses and extenuations he offered to himself, will no longer serve the purpose. He is left the prey of unrelenting self-reproach, the bitterest sorrow, and fruitless repentance: For, miserable as he is, he cannot part with the cause of his misery; hard as his bondage is, he cannot prevail with himself to shake it off. His *wickedness he spareth, and will not forsake it*, till it becomes altogether hateful,—*the gall of asps within him.*

Thus a wicked man, far from enjoying any friendship with himself, far from being the object of his own esteem and regard, is in truth the object of his own detestation and abhorrence.—And can a man carry such fire in his bosom and not be burnt? can he dwell with shame, remorse and self-condemnation, without being wretched? In this state he looks in vain for a friend to support and comfort him. There is no favour from God to the wicked, nor any friendship from men: Neither has he in the mean time any friend-
ship

S E R M.

V.

ship for himself. What can he love in himself? a heart—mean, contemptible, and full of pollution! piety and virtue lost, honour extinguished, all pleasing and well-grounded hopes erased, and the just terrour of future evil more tremendous—shaking his guilty soul!—Thus, *though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.*

S E R M.

S E R M O N VI.

ON THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

PSALM CXIX. 59, 60.

I thought on my former ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

THERE are many reasons for our receiving the Gospel of Christ Jesus with the utmost thankfulness; one of which is, That it assures us of the pardon of our past sins, upon our repenting, and forsaking them. Previously to this declaration of the Gospel, no man could, on clear grounds, satisfy himself, that
pardon

S E R M.
VI.

S E R M.
VI
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pardon from God would be the effect of repentance. Men indeed might, and did, entertain hopes of this kind, suggested by their natural notions of the Divine goodness. Yet their ignorance of the precise degree of severity which the wisdom of God might think requisite for securing the ends of his righteous government, would check their hopes, and perplex them with doubt and uncertainty. Repentance was indeed at all times the best thing that sinful men could apply to. But even supposing they could have rendered their repentance complete, and afterwards led a life perfectly upright,—which is supposing a great deal too much for creatures so weak and corrupt as men are,—yet even on this supposition, so entire a repentance could not have set their minds at ease, nor delivered them from the apprehension of the punishment which the All-wise God might see it proper to inflict on them for past iniquities: And no doubt this uncertainty of pardon was a great discouragement to set about the work of repentance

repentance heartily. But blessed be God, that all our doubts and fears are dispelled, by that light which Christ in the Gospel has let in upon us. It is his first admonition, *To repent and believe* *. He calls upon all men every where to repent; assuring them that God will have mercy on them, and will save them †. He teaches, that repentance will certainly procure pardon, though not necessarily, or in the way of natural consequence, but merely from the goodness of God, who is pleased to promise pardon to the real penitent, on account of the atonement which Christ made for sin by his own sufferings.

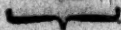
As mens ignorance then of this blessed effect of repentance, was a great discouragement to apply to it, so, on the other hand, the knowledge of this truth, with which we are now favoured, ought to excite and encourage us, heartily to begin and perfect this good

* Mark i. 15.

† Luke xiii. 3, 5. Acts ii. 38. iii. 19.

S E R M.

VI



good work. In the words of the text, the Psalmist expresses with great propriety what our duty is. In imitation of him, we ought to reflect upon our past actions; and on finding that they have been contrary to the righteous laws of God, we must turn from such practices to the observance of those righteous laws; and in so doing, we must yield to no delay, nor trust to any deceitful promises of forsaking our sins at a future period. Upon discovering any part of our past conduct to have been vicious, instant repentance and reformation ought to take place.

To enforce this duty is the design of the following discourse; in which I shall take occasion, *first*, To illustrate the nature of genuine repentance; and *secondly*, To offer some considerations to induce us instantly to set about the performance of that great and important work.

I.

I. I am to illustrate the nature of genuine repentance.

1. I begin with observing, That in order to render repentance complete and effectual, it must be founded on a clear discernment of our past sins and iniquities. A confused and indistinct apprehension that we are not what we ought to be, will not prove sufficient to produce that change of character and conduct, which is implied, in repentance. We must have a particular and distinct knowledge, as far as it can be obtained, of those vices which we most readily indulge in;—of *the sins which most easily beset us*; of our most *secret faults*, and the several aggravations that attend and heighten them. Any knowledge less than this, will not produce that genuine concern and sorrow for past misconduct which are essential to repentance. The necessity of this acquaintance with ourselves, is a circumstance we shall do well to take heed to. We find from the want of it, professions of repentance very common; but real and effectual repentance

S E R M.
VI

repentance very rare. It is no uncommon thing to see numbers of men very ready to confess, in general terms, that they are altogether corrupted, and wicked beyond measure;—that there is no good in them; and to express great sorrow on that account; while these acknowledgments are little better than words of course, and the expressions of sorrow uttered with very little corresponding concern of mind. An evident proof of this is, that no change of heart or conduct follows it. One principal cause of such behaviour is the want of a clear knowledge and conviction of our sins, and their particular nature. How indeed can it be thought, that a confused notion of our being sinful creatures, can serve the purposes of repentance and amendment? No evil disposition can be corrected, unless it be fully known, any more than a disease can be cured, unless it be well understood. Our sins are the diseases of our mind, and before a complete remedy can be applied, we must see into their causes, and the degrees of their strength.

strength. All men are sinful; but not after the same manner, nor in the same degree; and as well may a man pretend to repent for his neighbour, as for himself, if he does not clearly see and understand his own sins. It is impossible for a man to be affected with concern for past actions, or to resolve heartily to reform his ways, or to know how to set about reforming them, if he does not distinctly perceive what is wrong in them. The necessary foundation of true repentance therefore, is a distinct knowledge of our sins, and the degree in which they prevail over us. And this acquaintance with ourselves, can be acquired only by a strict search into our character;—a careful consideration of our ways, in imitation of the Psalmist. Transient and occasional reflections upon our actions, will not lay open to our view the motives that influenced us, or the ends we proposed by them, without which we must continue strangers to the real nature of those actions, a

S E R M.
VI.

clear view of which can alone lead us to true repentance.

2. As repentance is founded in a distinct knowledge of our sins, so is it ever accompanied with sorrow and shame on account of them. These feelings are the natural result of a just sense of our iniquities. They spring up in the heart of every man not quite hardened in vice, upon his discovering his unworthiness. Grief and shame lay hold of him, and mark him as their prey. The *men of this world*, as ignorant and bad men are called in scripture, grieve and mourn chiefly for outward losses, misfortunes, disappointments and bodily pain; but the true penitent considers these things as light and trivial, compared with the miserable loss of righteousness, and the intolerable pain of a sinful and self-condemning mind. The other evils are such as may be borne, and often are borne with dignity and resolution; but these are intolerable, and cannot be overbalanced by any thing whatsoever. So long as a man re-
tains

tains a sense of right and wrong, whenever he transgresses what is right, shame and concern will confound him. A man must be far gone in vice, who has lost all sense of shame; and there are very few who are so abandoned, as not to be conscious of this feeling, when their iniquities are exposed to the world. There is nothing so apt to overwhelm the heart with shame, as the consciousness of ingratitude. All vice bears the stain of ingratitude to God, and must particularly affect the penitent heart with the sharpest compunction. All vice is in its nature base and abominable, and must excite in the heart of the penitent, the utmost confusion and self-abasement; and every reflection of his soul will increase these sensations. If he turns his thoughts to God, whose goodness he has long neglected, or to his Saviour, whom he has wounded afresh by his sins;—if he reflects on the dignity of his immortal soul, which he has debased, or its just authority, which he has trampled on, or its honour,

S E R M
VI

which he has stained and corrupted ; or if he considers his fellow-creatures, whom he has injured and neglected, the deepest shame and confusion must take possession of him, and banish every joy. But this compunction of the penitent heart will prove salutary, and be productive of the best effects. For,—

3. Repentance does not stop here. That sense of sin which produces shame and confusion, operates a thorough change in the disposition of the true penitent. His former love of vice gives place to perfect hatred of it, and to firm resolutions of forsaking it, and living uprightly for the future. Shame and sorrow for sin are feelings that endure only while a sense of guilt remains. To guilt they belong, as the only certain fruit which it produces. These feelings were intended by our Maker, to stop us in the path of vice, if we have been so foolish and unhappy as to tread in it. But when we are thus turned away from transgression, those painful and miserable sensations gradually

ally abate, and give place to that real inward satisfaction, which is the fruit of real virtue. It is to be observed, however, that while life remains, temptations to vice will continue; and that notwithstanding the sincerity of our repentance, our good resolutions will require every support against those temptations; and therefore, when the shame and sorrow for past sins which urged us to repentance, are much abated in consequence of the change of our dispositions, it is evident, that some other defence is necessary to repel such temptations, and prevent the hazard of a relapse. Shame indeed, in every ingenuous mind, will rise more readily now than it did before, upon any particular deviation from a righteous course, from which the best of men are not entirely exempted;—shame, I say, will rise in a good man's mind more readily than ever, on all such occasions, and make him always more and more watchful and attentive to his conduct; but shame is not an habitual feeling, and does not rise till after

S E R M.
VI.

fin is actually committed, or at least intended in the mind. This shame therefore cannot prove a defence against temptations to such a degree as a strong and settled aversion to vice, —an honest indignation of soul, that takes alarm at the first appearance of evil. This is the only effectual antidote against the insinuations of sin,—this hatred of it in every shape, which works uniformly, constantly and instantaneously ; nor is repentance perfect till this hatred is wrought into the soul, and along with it an hearty scorn and contempt of all sinful pleasures. The true penitent thus fortified cannot be deceived, nor enticed, nor intimidated by temptations. He is strengthened by the conviction that vice, in every shape it can assume, is infamy and ruin to the soul of man. Formerly it was the idol which he worshipped, but now it is the fixed object of his contempt and aversion ; and thus he is inspired with a jealous attention, lest in a careless hour he be again betrayed by

by deceitful lusts which war against the soul. These effects of sorrow for sin and of true repentance, are expressed by the apostle Paul in singular and emphatic language. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of* : And he adds, *When ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge* * ! Repentance then is the fruit of such sorrow for sin and hearty aversion to it as effectually convert us from the practice of all impiety, to the keeping of God's commandments. This is the repentance which God requires, and which alone is acceptable in his sight.

Jesus our Lord has by his own sufferings made atonement for our sins, which it was not in our own power to accomplish ; and on account of that atonement, God has declared, that when we forsake our sins, He will forgive us, and receive us again into his favour.

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* 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

S E R M.
VI

—But that we may still better understand this subject, and avoid falling into mistakes, the following observations deserve our attention.

First: In order that repentance may prove stable and permanent, or, in the language of Paul, *not to be repented of*, the mind must acquire an indifference to the pleasures and advantages of life, so far as shall enable it, in case of competition, uniformly to prefer the satisfaction of an approving conscience to them all. As the chief source of vice is an excessive love of the world and worldly goods; so the chief support and security of virtue is a generous and reasonable indifference about these objects. Where this just indifference is wanting, repentance, whatever appearance of sincerity it may bear, will be of very short duration. It is very possible that a man may be affected with real concern for past misconduct, and sincerely resolve to amend for the future; and yet his resolution may fall to nothing, and that very quickly,

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This indeed must be the case wherever the love of the world predominates. The affections of our heart are the guide of our actions. What we love we will endeavour to obtain, and what we fear or hate we will avoid. While therefore our love of the world continues strongest in our hearts, sin will have dominion over us, and all our fits of repentance will prove vain and ineffectual. Here then we are to begin by adjusting our affections to the real value of their objects. In order to this we must examine the nature of these objects; and when we are convinced of the little value of this world's good, compared with the pleasures of an upright mind, and an approving conscience, we shall be disposed to withdraw our love and attachment from what does not deserve them. Then may we hope, that our repentance shall prove stedfast, and effectual for reforming our heart and life. But till this is done, the love of the world will be ever intruding itself, thwarting our purposes of amendment, stifling the secret whisperings of

S E R M.
VI.

of the Spirit, and retarding and stopping our progress in holiness. The love of the world, even when we think it sufficiently weakened, is often found lurking in the heart, and breaking out unexpectedly, to our great surprise and confusion. So long as we continue to be dazzled with the lustre of riches, to consider the persons possessed of them as the most fortunate of men ; so long as we aim at splendid distinction, and at worldly renown, as if we thought the obtaining of these were the noblest object in life, our feeble purposes of amendment deserve not the name of genuine repentance.

Secondly : It must be observed that true repentance is the beginning of a new life, the entrance on a Christian course, the foundation of an holy and virtuous conversation. It must therefore be firmly laid, that our constant work afterwards may be, by Divine aid, to build upon it the noble superstructure of virtue and holiness. To persevere in a course of vicious conduct, satisfied with short intervals

vals of remorse, and partial degrees of regret, which have not the effect to change that course, is a species of repentance so extremely false, as to be plainly of no avail in the sight of God. No doubt, in the course of a new life, of which repentance is the beginning, many failings and imperfections cleave to the best of men, which always give them real concern; but these failings do not argue a relapse into sin; and their concern for every deviation from duty, renders them more and more vigilant for the future. The worthiest men may occasionally be misled, and do what their heart condemns; but habits of sin, or an habitual indulgence of any vicious passion, is altogether inconsistent with the character of a true penitent, and discovers the man to be still *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity* *. The recurring of such habits is an incontestible evidence, that our repentance has been very superficial, imperfect, and delusive. When men are brought into

* Acts viii. 23.

S E R M.
VI.

into any severe distress, by their folly or wickedness, they cannot avoid blaming themselves; while they are actually suffering for their sins, they are indeed very miserable, and touched with remorse. In this situation, they very readily purpose to sin no more, as they have done; and they fondly flatter themselves that they are sincere. But a proof that, in many men, such purposes are false and deceitful, is, that when they are delivered from the trouble, inconvenience, and pain, which their sins brought upon them, they forget their contrition, and their good resolutions, and again yield to such temptations as formerly seduced them. True repentance produces an entire change of heart and life,—of views, desires, and actions; a complete renunciation of all vicious pursuits and gratifications, with a firm resolution to keep the commandments of the living God; and any degree of it that falls short of this, is not that repentance to which God has annexed the promise of pardon.

Thirdly:

Thirdly : Repentance is the work of the Divine Spirit. As this *Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God* *, so it worketh with our spirit in our endeavours to become so. It attends and assists us in the beginning and whole course of a virtuous life. This Divine Guide acts the part of a faithful monitor, and by secret whisperings, urges our return to God, and the practice of our duty. How often may we be sensible of virtuous thoughts and sentiments rising within us, without any previous meditation? And is it unreasonable to ascribe these to the suggestions of that Spirit, which *worketh in us both to will and to do, according to God's good pleasure* †. These spontaneous motions of the soul towards God, we may well consider as admonitions from the Divine Spirit; and we ought carefully to attend to them, and yield to their impulse. When we are thus disposed, the Spirit will gradually communicate farther illumination, and greater power, for defeating

* Rom. viii. 16.

† Philip. ii. 13.

S E R M.
VI.

ing our spiritual enemies, and maintaining our integrity.

That the Divine assistance is requisite for the support of our virtue, will not be denied by any real Christian, nor indeed by any others who pay attention to the present weak and corrupted state of human nature, and to the various and multiplied circumstances of temptation, with which it is environed;—who know how easily often good resolutions are broken, how often they vanish at the appearance of very slight trials, how weak a resistance reason can give to the attacks of keen and violent passions, and how ill qualified most men are to stand unshaken against the strong current of vicious example, so generally prevailing. If, then, the assistance of the Divine Spirit be so necessary during the progress of the Christian life, it must surely be in a peculiar manner so, for performing the work of repentance; when we have many confirmed bad habits to root up, the repeated assaults of appetite and passion to withstand and repel,

repel, the power and dominion of sin to crush;—when we have to forsake beloved lusts, which is *like plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand*;—in short, when we have the whole bent of our inclinations, and the whole course of our life to change. This is plainly a work too arduous for our weak, and often baffled reason, to undertake and execute of itself. It is by much the hardest task of a Christian. For though the Christian life is at all times, and during the whole of its course, a watchful and a fighting life; yet its progress, when compared with the peculiar difficulties at the beginning of it, is light and easy. At the time of repentance, our enemies are most numerous, and their attacks most incessant. When a man firmly resolves to repent, and shake off the fetters of sin, then his passions, like a desperate enemy, put forth their utmost efforts to keep their hold, and conquer his resolution. Hence it evidently appears that the Divine Spirit is necessary, to carry us through with

S E R M.
VI.

with this work. Without God, we can do nothing in it to any purpose. This, however, is so far from being a discouragement, that it affords the strongest reason to undertake it, and the best hopes of success; as we are assured that we shall not be left alone, but have the Divine Spirit always at hand, and always ready to assist us.

Lastly; and to conclude this part of the subject: Let all frequently apply for this Divine Assistant, by the most fervent prayer. Our Lord declares, that *he who asks shall receive*, that *he who seeks shall find*, and that *to him that knocketh, the gates of grace and righteousness shall be opened**. He that asks shall obtain, if he *ask in faith, nothing wavering*†. No distrust or suspicion of disappointment must possess our hearts; for that would entirely blast the accomplishment of our purpose. If we are suspicious of the Divine aid, the strong confidence of soul, which is necessary, will quite vanish. If, through distrust, we be-
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* Matth. vii. 7.

† Jam. i. 6.

gin to consider our foes as invincible, that circumstance gives them an advantage which they will not fail to improve against us. They will increase this distrust, till it break our resolution altogether.

S E R M.
VI.
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Being in nothing afraid then, but full of unreserved trust in our heavenly Father, let us habitually apply to the throne of grace, for assistance in the time of need. If our own endeavours to repent and reform are sincere, we need not doubt the gracious aid of the Spirit of God. He delights in the efforts of the upright and well-disposed mind; nor will He ever *break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax**; but cherish every growing grace, watch over it with a parent's eye, and bring it forward to perfection.

* Is. xlii. 3.

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S E R M O N VII.

ON THE DANGER OF DELAYING RE-
PENTANCE.

PSALM cix. 60.

*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Com-
mandments.*

THE certain fruit of sin, is misery. There-
fore every wise man will, without de-
lay, upon properly discerning his sins, turn
from them to the keeping of the command-
ments of God. In other words, he will have
recourse to immediate repentance. The na-
ture of genuine repentance, I have already
L 2 endeavoured

S E R M.
VII.

S E R M.
VII.

endeavoured to illustrate in the foregoing part of this discourse. It remains,—

II. In the next place, To state some important considerations, which may induce us, in imitation of the Psalmist, instantly to set about the performance of this great and necessary work.

The sense of the excellence of virtue and of the obligations to embrace it, is so deeply impressed on the human mind, that no man can act in contradiction to it with impunity. Dissatisfaction and remorse are the scourge of transgression; and various methods are adopted by wicked men to furnish a temporary relief from that scourge. But in these they are, in general, great self-deceivers. Either they do not think themselves so bad as they really are, which is a common deceit; or they flatter themselves that God will not be severe against them. Sometimes they muster up excuses for their sins:—" Their temptations
" were too great for their frail nature; they
" were

“ were surpris’d, when off their guard ; they
“ did not think the evils they were led to
“ commit, were so heinous ;”—and for these
or similar reasons, they hope to be excus’d
and forgiven : Or, what is equally common,
though they may think themselves very wick-
ed and corrupt at present, yet they are not re-
solved to continue so. On the contrary, they
promise to themselves that they will grow
better :—“ Some time or other before they die,
“ they will repent, and turn to *the keeping of*
“ *God’s commandments.*” They suffer no doubts
to enter their mind respecting the long con-
tinuance of their life ; and they flatter them-
selves that long before it draws to a close, they
shall have time sufficient for reforming, and
preparing for heaven. Deceived by this false
and bewitching hope, they proceed from one
vice to another, without much disturbance
from the reflections of their own mind, whose
remonstrances they have thus fallen on a
method to suppress ;—or, more properly speak-
ing, only to divert,—soon again to be roused

S E R M.
VIL

in a more dreadful manner than ever. These faint purposes, and distant views of repentance, are far more dangerous than a thoughtless indulgence in vice. For they harden the heart more; and to its habitual disposition to sin and folly, they add a habit of duplicity and deceit; which, of all things, is the most dangerous to virtue, and the most powerful support of vice in the heart of man.

To prevent our being deceived by such vain and insincere purposes, and to engage us, without delay, to turn from our sins to the *keeping of God's commandments*, let us consider with attention the following arguments.

1. By delaying repentance, we run a manifest risk of hardening our hearts to such a degree, as to render our reformation afterwards, well nigh impracticable.

The difficulty of repentance and reformation is uniformly increasing, as the man grows old in vice. This consideration is a powerful argument for immediate application to them,

them, even though we could have time at our command; because the difficulty may at length become invincible. Our evil passions are ever acquiring additional strength, in consequence of continued indulgence; and our better principles are ever losing strength, in consequence of repeated neglect. By degrees we become less able, and, what is worse, less willing, to resist temptations, till at length we have no remaining inclination at all to resist them. Thus, a bad man becomes so enslaved to vice, as to be unable to shake off its fetters, and of so base a mind as to be unwilling to shake them off. So vain is the purpose of repenting on some future occasion, and so dangerous the neglect of the present opportunity! If it is good to repent at any time, it is surely best at the present time. If it is wise to forsake our sins at all, it must be wisest to do it immediately, while there are hopes of succeeding in the attempt. So that, setting aside all other considerations, the folly, —indeed the madness, of delaying repentance,

S E R M
VII

and the necessity of an immediate application to it, appear from this circumstance, that the longer it is delayed, it is always growing more difficult, and may at length be rendered impracticable, both from the nature of evil habits, and from the just judgement of God against obstinate offenders. The experience of mankind, uniform and uninterrupted, puts the truth of these observations out of all question, and inculcates the necessity of turning, without delay, from our sins, to keep the commandments of God, while there is hope of success.

2. Another powerful argument for repenting without delay, is this, That religion and virtue are the chief business of our lives.

Repentance is the beginning of this our most proper employment. To delay it, therefore, is to neglect the performance of the very thing for which we were made. We were not sent into this world merely to gratify sensual inclinations; that being the object and end

end of the brute creation. Neither was it the intention of our Maker that we should employ all our thoughts, time and labour, in accumulating wealth, or in acquiring fame and distinction. From eternity, God hath decreed, that neither the chief work, nor the happiness of mankind, shall be found in these pursuits. Accordingly, those men who never aspired higher, far from finding any permanent satisfaction in them, have been forced at last to cry out, "All such things are *vanity.*" This *counsel of the Lord shall stand for ever*; for none of these things are sufficient to exercise and fill up the capacity of man's immortal spirit, or to satisfy its just desires. Religion and virtue are the only things that can give proper and full exercise to our rational powers, and true satisfaction to the heart. If we had been made for gross and sensual gratifications chiefly, why were we endued with reason, or made *wiser than the beasts of the field*? If the conveniencies of this world were to be our chief pursuit, why

S E R M.
VII.

why were we formed of such a nature as to desire a better, and to be dissatisfied with the present? We do not see that God has made any one thing in vain, or furnished any species of creatures with powers or dispositions that are not requisite for obtaining their several ends. Brute creatures, who are only formed for sensual gratifications, have neither a sense of God, nor any discernment of good from evil, nor any prospect of immortality. If men had been formed for the insignificant concerns of this world only, is it to be supposed, that they would have been furnished with such exalted powers? Why is man made capable of distinguishing the Creator of all things from his works, and of discerning, in some degree, the Divine excellence? Why has he a sense of the difference betwixt right and wrong, good and evil; with a conscience that approves the right and abhors the evil? Why has God formed him with a longing desire for immortality and a better world? Surely that his mind might be raised above the present

present perishing state of things. Did not God form us at first after his own image, which consists in righteousness and true holiness? Did not his eternal Son come into this world, on purpose to restore that blessed image to our minds, after we had corrupted and lost it? As God created us at first, did not Christ Jesus come to create us again to glory and to virtue? What was the purpose of our Saviour's precepts, or of his example, or of his promise of pure and perfect happiness hereafter? Say, my brethren, was it to instruct us concerning the affairs of this world? was it to teach us to seek after its pleasures and interests as our chief good?—Or was it not to raise our thoughts and affections above them, and make us seek for immortal glory, by a course of religion and virtue? These, therefore, constitute the chief business of our lives here; and repentance is the turning and determination of our minds to the performance of that business. It is relinquishing the life of a brute; it is ceasing to commit folly; it

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S E R M.
VII.

is answering the end and call of our rational nature. The soul of man is evidently intended to be the seat of knowledge, piety and virtue; and in the acquisition of knowledge, and exercise of piety and virtue, consists our chief occupation. As well might we imagine, that the end of a brute creature was merely to grow like a plant, as to fancy that the chief end of man was to provide for the gratification of sense, of appetite and passion. Let the wicked then turn themselves to the work of repentance. How long will they put off to be wise? How long will they delay to act as men? Religion and virtue alone are truly manly. Vice is ignoble and base. Virtue is wisdom and true glory. Vice is folly and infamy. To the work of righteousness all men are called: For it all men are made, and all situations of life give opportunity to perform it. It is not inconsistent with any kind of lawful and reasonable occupation in this world: On the contrary, the conducting of our affairs with order and integrity, is one of

of the great works of virtue and holiness. All men must take part in worldly affairs of one kind or other, in a greater or less degree; but whatsoever share of them the good man is called to take, his chief attention is to make all his actions to accord with the laws of God. The rectitude of them all is supported by an habitual desire of the Divine approbation. He is animated in all his conduct by the love of God, the love of mankind, and the love of goodness; and his constant care is to preserve the purity of his mind, uncorrupted by his unavoidable connection with present affairs and sinful men. Are worldly men anxious to accumulate wealth, which shall be either taken from them, or they from it? and shall not we be more careful to lay up the true wealth of the soul,—the graces and virtues of the Spirit, which can never be taken from us? Is there a propriety in paying attention to the establishment of good order in worldly affairs? and is there not an order of far greater moment to be sought after,—even the order of

S E R M.
VII.

a good and pious heart, undisturbed by sinful passions? It is this inward beauty and order of soul, which we are called to take care of, when invited to repentance. Which of the two shall we esteem the most noble work?—the care and attention given to the pursuit of worldly and bodily advantages, for their own sake, or the attending to them chiefly with a view to improve ourselves in piety and virtue? No man who thinks calmly and deliberately, can hesitate in deciding this question in favour of virtue. The glory of a man is his immortal spirit, while it retains a resemblance to his heavenly Father; but this spirit becomes his shame and disgrace, when its noble powers are prostituted to be the servile tools of base and vicious passions. If we have unhappily been obnoxious to this shame, let us not delay for a moment to wipe it away: For if it is shameful to have been the slaves of sin at all, it is peculiarly so to continue such slaves. The true glory of a sinner is to repent, and to despise whatever ridicule this
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may expose him to, amongst foolish and wicked men. It is the weakness of a man to fall a prey to temptation. It is the mark of real vigour and sound understanding, to rise again to newness of life.

S E R M.
VII.

3. To engage us to repent without delay, consider, That religion and virtue, which are mens principal business, require time and diligence to be brought to any degree of maturity.

As no man becomes greatly wicked all at once, but arrives at the height of iniquity by degrees; so no man can all at once become completely righteous. If time is necessary to render a man altogether depraved, much more necessary is it for confirming his heart in piety and virtue. Progress in vice is found to be carried on much faster than progress in goodness. The first is like descending, and is performed with greater ease, and in shorter time than the other, which consists in ascending continually. For though
piety

S E R M.
VII.

piety and virtue are not placed on a height that is inaccessible, yet it is a height, in ascending which, both time and unwearied exertion are necessary. To be satisfied of this, we need only reflect wherein piety and virtue consist. No man surely imagines that they consist in knowledge alone, however sound and true it may be. Knowledge is but one of the means of acquiring them. Neither do they consist in the observance of external ordinances, which in themselves are but the semblance and outside of religion. True religion is a principle in the heart, exerting itself in universal righteousness; it is an entire disposition to do the will of God. True religion is a fixed principle of love to God, attended with so strong a love to holiness for its own sake, as influences a man's whole conduct. No man can deem himself truly good, till the reality of this divine principle be evinced by the habitual practice of virtue;—till he find himself habitually disposed to love and obedience, reverence and submission to God;

to the practice of justice, honesty, temperance, moderation and self command, and to sentiments of diffusive goodness and tenderness to all men. Religion supposes our natural appetites and inclinations to be confined within due bounds, and all extravagant and vicious passions to be subdued, and reduced under the controul of conscience and the Divine law. These habits must be so strong, as uniformly to overcome the temptations of the world, as far as the frailty and imperfection of human nature will permit. Can it then be conceived, that a short time is sufficient to produce such habits of virtue? Can that which is meant to be the work of our whole life, be rightly performed in a small portion of it? A good man will find the longest life too short for reaching the wished for state of perfection? How then can it be thought, that a short time will prove sufficient to establish holy and virtuous habits in the soul? Habits of all kinds are acquired only by repeated actions, but the performance of a course of ac-

S E R M.

VII

tions requires a course of time. Such, however, is the infatuation of those who delay repentance, that they are always contriving work for longer time, and always making the time for doing it shorter. A man far gone in vice, is like a traveller who has wandered far out of his road; and when he thinks of returning to it, a considerable time must be spent in tracing back his wandering steps, before he reaches the right path.—In short, habits of holiness cannot be acquired in a short time, or by formal and slight resolutions; they are the effect only of resolute violence exerted against sinful passions, and of acts of goodness frequently repeated; all which evidently require time, as well as diligence and constant watchfulness over ourselves. But the present time only is ours; what is future we may never see. Why then delay repentance for a moment, and risk our all on the faithless bottom of futurity? Why trust to so great an uncertainty as the continuance of human life, which very trifling causes may

speedily

speedily put an end to? It is always deemed foolish to put off till another occasion, any work that can be as well done at present; but no folly can equal the putting off the most important and necessary work, when the present time is all we can promise on;—a work too which requires a length of time for performing it rightly; nay, a work, which all the time we can have here is too little for bringing to perfection; but which, imperfect though it be, God will, through Jesus Christ, accept of, if we carefully improve the time allotted us. As religion and virtue therefore require time to be rightly performed, and as repentance is the entrance on a virtuous life, let us, without delay, set about the discharge of this great duty.

But not only are religion and virtue the work of time, but of much attention and diligence likewise, which is another motive for immediate application to them. It was observed, that the longer repentance is delayed, the difficulty of it will always increase,

S E R M.
VII

till at last it become unfurmountable. But though a man shall repent early, and the works of righteousness become somewhat easy and delightful, yet persevering in the practice of them, will require diligence, attention, and labour. For while he is employed in such works, many things occur to ensnare and seduce him, and break his attachment to them; and it is only by degrees, and repeated exertion, that he can acquire the habit of despising and conquering temptations. Even an innocent person,—if we could suppose such a one in the world,—could not be deemed firmly established in virtue, unless it were secured by habit. And if even such a man would find it a work of labour and watchfulness, to establish the dominion of righteousness in his heart, how much more requisite must this labour be for men already corrupted,—tainted with actual iniquity, and who have many enemies in their own breast to fight and watch against. If a man, with all

all the strength of innocence, would be obliged to fight his way up to the glorious height of goodness and virtue, how much greater must the struggle be to men already much weakened by vicious habits?

S E R M.

VII.

That religion is attended with labour, is no real discouragement to apply to it. Indeed, there is nothing of any value in life, that can be got without labour. It is not therefore to be expected that the most valuable of all things can be obtained with ease. The necessity of the thing is an unanswerable reason for beginning to it; and the necessity of labour and diligence for bringing it to any tolerable degree of perfection, should urge us to begin without delay.

No satisfying reason can be assigned, why men do not repent immediately, but that they are unwilling and indisposed to repent at all. Their objection to the present time, is no other than that it is present; and when any future season shall become present, the same objection will still subsist. They shall then

S E R M.
VII.

be as unwilling, nay more so than formerly. This putting off, therefore, is no other than deceiving ourselves;—at which it must be acknowledged we are abundantly dexterous and ready.

It is one part of the tenderness of the Gospel, that it promises pardon to a real penitent of any age, and at any season whatever. But there is great reason to conclude, that this mercy has often been, and still continues to be, much abused; numbers being induced by it to imagine, that if they can but repent before they die, their pardon and happiness will be secure;—nay, that repentance on a death-bed, will serve the purpose sufficiently. It is probable that confidence in such hopes, is one of the common causes of delaying repentance.—But as this is a matter of no small moment, we shall endeavour to put it in its true light.

The Gospel declares, that *whoever believes and repents shall be saved.* This is spoken of such persons as, upon the first hearing of the Gospel,

Gospel, and having its nature explained to them, readily give their assent to it, turn from their former evil courses, and resolve to live as it directs. To all who thus discover so unprejudiced a regard to its truth, and so cheerfully comply with its laws, God will extend his mercy, whether they be in youth, mature age, or the decline of life. But is the case of such persons, however old, the same with that of those who have long enjoyed the Gospel, long heard its call, and yet willfully put off obeying it to the end of their days? There is a manifest difference betwixt these two kinds of men; and it must be acknowledged, that the latter have no claim to the same favourable treatment with the former. Those who, on the first discovery of the truths of the Gospel, candidly assent to them, and readily obey them, breaking off their sins by repentance, shall find mercy. But it is no where said, that men who have long had access to know the truth as revealed by Christ, and have long despised and rejected it, shall, on account of

S. E. R. M.
VII.

repentance at the close of life, be received into the favour of God. So far from it, that there seems to be a declaration of a quite contrary nature: That *for obstinate transgressors there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation**;—so little reason is there to trust to a late repentance, or to imagine that God will certainly accept of it,—will accept of the service of the refuse of a man's life, after the best of his days have been spent in sin and folly! What can be reckoned *a turning of the grace of God into wantonness*, if this ungrateful abuse of it is not so?

But though it be no where said, that repentance at the close of life, will procure pardon for obstinate transgressors; yet we must not presume to confine the mercy of God. It may not be inconsistent with the Divine mercy to accept of sincere repentance at any time. Although, however, it were certain, that God would accept even of a death-bed repentance,

* Heb. x. 26, 27.

a thousand reasons loudly dissuade us from trusting to it. For, setting aside the consideration of the uncertainty of time, of sudden and unexpected death, and likewise the consideration that long practice of sin both disables and disinclines men from repentance,—which are unanswerable reasons against delaying it at all,—the madness of trusting to repentance at the close of life, will be clearly seen by taking a short retrospect of the true nature of that duty, and by viewing the circumstances of a bad man at his last hours.

Mere sorrow for sin is not repentance; neither is repentance a parting with our sins when we can keep them no longer. It consists in something very different, even in such a hearty and unfeigned concern of mind for past vicious indulgence, and so just, deliberate, and strong an aversion to it, as produce a thorough change in heart and life. Would we repent effectually then, we have many bad habits to remove, which requires considerable strength; and they can be eradicated only by degrees, as they were contracted.

S E R M.
VII.

contracted. Good habits also must be planted and established in the heart, which can be done only by repeated practice. At repentance we have many bad things to unlearn, and many good ones to acquire, many irregular appetites to restrain, domineering passions to subdue, holy affections to cultivate and confirm, and strong exertions to make, in order to efface, if possible, former vices; and in particular, we have restitution to make for the injuries we have done to others; for this is an indispensable part of repentance. The achievement of all this then is no small work: And can a bad man think himself fit for it at the approach of death, when he is generally unfit for any thing else? when his strength is almost exhausted; when grief for having brought himself into a perilous situation confounds him, and numberless cares distract him; when sin has debased and enslaved his heart, and fearful forebodings of future misery perplex his soul? When he is thus distracted, enslaved, confounded! can he think himself well qualified for repentance

and

and real amendment, which require calm reflection, and vigour, and courage, and vigilance? Are these things to be expected when the soul is grievously weakened? Can religion, which ought to have been the chief business of life, be sufficiently minded just when life is running to a close?

But farther: Supposing all this might be done, supposing such a real change might be wrought, as would certainly appear, if longer time were allowed the man to prove it by his conduct; there is one consideration which ought to hinder all men from trusting to late repentance, which is, That no man can be sure that his repentance at or near death, is sincere. He may have all the appearance of it, so far as to deceive himself and those who observe him, without the reality. Of this we shall be convinced, if we consult either reason or experience.

First: If we consult Reason, it will tell us, that it is the most natural thing in the world for bad men, at the approach of death,
to

S E R M.
VII

to be very heartily sorry that they have brought themselves into a dangerous situation, and to tremble at the prospect of future woes, to which their wickedness has exposed them: And this sorrow may certainly exist where there is no real repentance,—no generous concern arising from the odious nature of vice, to which they have basely submitted,—nothing but consternation and grief arising from the prospect of something dreadful awaiting them. This sorrow may be little connected with ingenuous shame for having offended God, or just concern for having polluted their own souls. It may be little more than a brutish creature would feel, could it foresee any great evil threatening it. Such fear and grief it is natural for a bad man, who thinks at all, to feel at the approach of death, even when his heart is not in the least mended; and such sorrow and fear will assume all the appearance of genuine repentance, so as to deceive both the man himself, and all around him.

Secondly :

Secondly: What Reason thus teaches, Experience, that great instructor of mankind, puts out of all question. For is it not matter of experience, that many bad men, when subjected to distress and the fear of death, have felt all this disquiet, concern and sorrow, have shewn all the signs of real repentance, so as to deceive both themselves and others, and have made many promises of reforming, if God should recover them;—and yet, after recovery, have returned to their former corrupted courses? It is even, alas! too true, that of the numbers who have been apparently so penitent in time of danger, few or none have, after deliverance from trouble, in fact reformed their lives.

UPON the whole then, since the necessary work of religion and virtue requires time and diligence to be brought to any degree of perfection, let the wicked, without a moment's delay, begin a course of reformation by repentance; and as no after penitence can be
trusted

S E R M.
VII.

trusted to, far less that which men have recourse to at the approach of death, let no man be thus deceived; but while there is time and opportunity, let all attend to their proper work, lest they be deprived of all future opportunity for ever.

S E R.

S E R M O N VIII.

ON THE HAPPY STATE OF THE TRUE
PENITENT.

PSALM xxxii. 1, 2.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man
unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

THOUGH mankind are all earnestly engaged in the pursuit of happiness, they are not found generally successful. But in whatever true happiness may be supposed to consist, it will occur at once that it can only be obtained by a mind properly qualified for the enjoyment

S E R M.
VIII.

S E R M.
VIII.

enjoyment of it: And the next obvious thought is, that the mind cannot be so qualified, unless it be in a state of tranquillity. While the mind is distracted or disquieted, it would be very vain to expect true or solid felicity. This inward peace, or composure of mind, is therefore the first thing to be secured, in order to be happy. Such tranquillity, however, cannot be obtained or supported, till we have reason to hope that we enjoy peace with God. Mankind are confessedly transgressors of the laws of their Maker, and liable to the just punishment of their transgressions; and till we are delivered from the apprehension and dread of that punishment, the foundation of happiness must be wanting. The sting of sin must be first plucked out, and the terrour of its consequences removed, before our hearts can know peace; and this terrour must be removed, not by presumptuous self-flattery, but by a just and well-grounded persuasion of the mercy of God, agreeably to what is asserted in the text; *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,*
whose

whose *sin* is covered. *Blessed* is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

S E R M.

VIII

These words teach us, that true blessedness is the fruit of well-grounded hope in the mercy of God, as graciously disposed to forgive our sins; which hope must be united to a consciousness on our part, that we renounce and forsake those sins, heartily and sincerely, without guile, hypocrisy, or any reserve whatever. For it is evident that the expression, *In whose spirit there is no guile*, must be understood as applicable to the confessing and forsaking of sin. So that the subject now before us, is the blessedness of all real penitents, who have reason to entertain the hope that God will mercifully pardon their transgressions.

THIS blessedness is entirely of a spiritual nature; neither proceeding from outward circumstances, nor depending upon them. It is a solid, permanent joy and satisfaction of heart, resting upon God and his gracious promise

S E R M.
VIII

of mercy in the Gospel of Christ Jesus: And that our notion of it may be the juster, and our desire for it the higher, it will be proper, to consider it in the following points of view, to wit; as set in opposition,—*First*, To the doubts and anxiety which perplex the uncertain mind; *secondly*, To the terrour that haunts the impenitent mind; and, *thirdly*, To the distraction of soul, which attends ungoverned and vicious passions.

I. We have to consider the blessedness of true penitents, as set in opposition to the doubts and anxiety which perplex the uncertain mind.

It is manifest that the human mind is at present in a corrupted and degraded state; that it is not only polluted by vicious passions, which continually struggle for the command, and for victory over conscience; but that these passions frequently succeed in the contest; that, influenced by them, men transgress the laws of their Maker, counteract his will,

will, disregard his authority, and are rebels against his government. The consequence of all this, is a just dread of God's displeasure, which must banish all peace of mind.

For, let us suppose that a man begins to reflect on his past conduct. Upon comparing the sanctity of God's law with his own impurity; the obligations to obey it, with his own disobedience; and the threatenings of the Almighty, with his own demerits;—what hope could he entertain of mercy from God? Let us even suppose that his reflections produce a thorough conviction of his guilt, fill him with the deepest sorrow and shame, on account of it, and engage him to resolve upon hearty repentance and amendment;—nay, let us put the case in the strongest light, by supposing that he is not only sincere in this resolution, but able also, and willing, and uniformly careful to put it in execution. In this case, it is evident that God would be pleased with his future obedience; but would this be sufficient to banish anxious doubt and

S. E. R. M.
VIII

fear from his mind, on account of his past transgressions? If he were totally unacquainted with the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, what ground of hope could he have that God would pardon his former wickedness? What he has perpetrated in opposition to the Divine will, cannot by himself be annulled. What strong reasons there may be for inflicting punishment on him, he cannot know. He is no judge of the rules of the Divine proceedings with guilty men. Hence, anxious doubt and suspicion must perplex his mind, and drive peace far away from his breast. A serious minded man, in these circumstances, will no doubt turn his thoughts every way in quest of relief, and to find some firm ground of hope in the Divine mercy. In this search, he will readily turn his attention to the numberless instances of the Divine goodness diffused through the world; and from them, some probable hope of mercy will arise. But as his object is not to flatter himself with delusive hopes, but to obtain some real

real and fixed rest to his anxious and uncertain mind; he will be led, by his fears, to consider also what is unfavourable to these pleasing expectations of mercy; and in this disposition, the very thought of God's goodness will confound him, when he reflects how inattentive to it, how insensible of it, and how ungrateful for it he has been. His own unworthiness will overwhelm him; and a dark cloud will involve his soul, when just beginning to be cheered with the hope of mercy. Add to this, the consideration of the threatenings of the Almighty against sin, of the judgements of God which he must see already gone abroad through the earth, and of the misery that follows sin, even in this world; (all of which are manifest tokens of the Divine displeasure against vice) and he will still be found very far removed from true peace and repose of mind. After all the turnings of his anxious soul, his only refuge at last, is a mere supposition;—"Perhaps the Lord will have mercy on me, and

S E R M.
VIII.

S E R M.
VIII.

“pardon my transgressions:”—And is not this very state of uncertainty and suspense, which thus leaves the soul to be tossed about betwixt hope and fear, fond expectation and dreaded disappointment, the very reverse of settled and certain satisfaction?—But to a man of this spirit, once display clearly the mercy of God; let him hear the voice of the Gospel, proclaiming pardon to the humble penitent, through Jesus Christ; sound in his ears, that *the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth**; immediately his doubts will vanish, and all perplexing apprehensions disappear. His soul now rejoices in the Lord, and exults in the Author of his deliverance. He has now found a rock, and a stay to his soul, and a sure defence against confounding fears.

This is the happy state of the penitent Christian, in whose heart there is no guile. Instead of the apparent opposition betwixt the mercy of God, on one hand, and the Divine wisdom

* Exod. xxxiv. 6.

wisdom and truth, on the other, which kept his mind in cruel suspense, he now, in the wonderful scheme of the Gospel, beholds *righteousness and peace, mercy and truth met together*, and concurring for the salvation of penitent sinners. Persuaded of this mercy and favour of God, every doubt, every fear, every suspicion is quelled and silenced within him; and in his merciful Father he reposes himself; knowing that there is *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* *.

II. THIS blessedness will appear greater, by setting it in opposition to the dread and terror that tear the impenitent heart.

That the fruit of wickedness is remorse, and terror of judgement from God, is a matter of fact and experience. Every bad man, when he allows himself to think, is conscious of demerit; and from that foresight which is natural to man, he cannot but dread the just

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punishment

* Rom. viii. 1.

S E R M.
VIII.

punishment of his iniquities. For to the obstinate offender, who knows not God, and obeys not the Gospel, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour* such an *adversary* of God and goodness *. True, my brethren, a wicked and impenitent man, while in health and prosperity, may fall on various means of silencing his conscience, of quelling its remonstrances, of turning his eyes away from beholding his iniquities; by busying himself continually about his sinful and worthless pursuits, by giving himself no time for calm thought and reflection, or by fallacious thoughts and inward promises of altering his conduct, so as afterwards to obtain the Divine mercy. No doubt men do often thus smother their consciences, and may for a season be strangers to the terrors of guilty minds, which sooner or later will rise with irresistible force. Thus wicked men, in prosperity, harden themselves in

* Heb. x. 26, 27.

in their iniquities; and because God does not immediately *execute judgement against them*, they are hardened still the more; little thinking that all the while each sin is noted down, and kept in faithful record, not only by the Almighty, their awful Judge, but by their own minds, which in due season will, to their confusion and amazement, produce the long black list,—shaking their souls with unwonted and dreadful alarms! The soul cannot always continue in an unthinking state. Although in prosperity it may banish all sober reflection, *in adversity it will consider*. A man cannot always amuse and deceive himself. Pain and affliction, if nothing else can do it, certainly will rouse a man's thought, and break the charm that bound him;—and how wretched must that creature be, who has no thoughts to be roused, but such as must torment him!—none but what must make him afraid! The farther such a wretched being can withdraw his thoughts from God, so much the better for him; because he has no hopes
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S E R M.
VIII

in the Divine mercy.—Here by the way we may observe, that was there no other reason to make men repent of their sins, and fly to the mercy of God, the single consideration of finding a sure resource in times of trouble would be sufficient. When outward comfort is gone, there is the greatest need of inward consolation; but what inward consolation can that soul have, that has no well-grounded persuasion of the mercy of God, but trembles with dread of his awful vengeance?—But to return.

It is too much to allow, that the impenitent are ever entirely free from fears, when prosperous and healthful. For what makes them at such pains to deceive the world about their character? What makes them so cautious of a full display of their hearts, unless it be a suspicion that all is not right within? What makes them avoid turning their thoughts inward? What makes them run so fast from one gratification to another? What occasions their restlessness and hurry of spirit? but the fear of observing their own unworthiness,

ness, and the fear of the anger of God, which, as a spectre, still haunts them; sometimes nearer, and sometimes at a greater distance; and as a dark cloud big with thunder, still hangs over them, ready to burst on their guilty heads! They shut their eyes that they may not see the danger; but an apprehension of its reality still infests their minds.

The guilty mind too, is naturally the seat of superstition, which is a constant enemy to peace,—to that genuine peace, which is the portion of the penitent and pardoned soul alone. The peace of the true penitent is not at the mercy of the varying circumstances of this life. It depends not on the health of the body, nor the easy flow of animal spirit, nor on the success of worldly schemes. Its roots are struck deep beyond the reach of these things; and when these fail, it remains unshaken by fear, and reposes in the undoubted hope of God's mercy. Starts of false peace and joy are all the portion of the wicked. Terrour ever attends them, and often
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S E R M.
VIII.

lays its cruel and unrelenting hands upon them. But the blessedness of the penitent is constant, stayed and firm. Terror and dismay lie prostrate at his feet, totally overcome. This is the blessing which Christianity hath procured to the world. This is the inestimable gift of God through Jesus Christ. This blessedness the Lord offers to all who will come unto him; for he has proclaimed peace upon earth, and good will towards humble and penitent sinners. Glory, therefore, to God and to our Redeemer in the highest!

III. This blessedness will appear still greater, by stating it in opposition to that distraction of heart which is occasioned by the ungoverned passions of the impenitent.

It must be remembered here, that though there are remains of corruption in the heart of a penitent, though there are wrong passions not totally subdued, which, while he lives, he must watch against and fight with,

in

S E R M.
VIII.

in order to complete victory; yet we must not imagine, that his mind is the seat of a variety of unrestrained passions, that have full range within him, and often contend with each other for the complete command of him, while conscience, unheeded and despised, is abused and trampled under foot; nor must we conceive, that in his soul one sinful Master-Passion commands all the rest,—and the conscience too. This is the state only of wicked and impenitent sinners, who harbour iniquity in their hearts, and in whom the Lord will have no pleasure. Of such persons the sacred Writer speaks, when he says, “*There is no peace saith my God to the wicked; they are like the troubled sea, which casteth up both mire and dirt**,” while the heart of the penitent is as the smooth water moved by gentle gales of moderate affection, but never ruffled by any storms of impetuous passion. What are restless ambition, sordid avarice, gnawing envy, spiteful malice, peevish fretfulness,

* If. lvii. 20, 21.

S E R M.
VIII

fulness, fell revenge, furious anger, brutal intemperance,—and all the rest of the lawless tribe of sinful passions, but as so many wild beasts, which tear the wicked heart in pieces, and, in the fury of their frequent contentions, lay it waste and desolate? Can calm peace dwell with such outrageous foes? No, there is no room for such a gentle guest, while all is in such confusion. Far it wanders from such an abode, and rests only on the penitent mind, rightly prepared for it by confidence in the Divine mercy. Right apprehensions of this mercy work repentance in the soul. Repentance chases away these turbulent passions, and introduces in their room every amiable and pleasant affection of the heart;—Faith and Hope and Charity, these three sister graces, that never part. True hope of the Divine favour fills the soul with joyful love of God, and diffuses such a flow of satisfaction through the mind, as sweetens its whole temper, corrects all its harshness, smooths every rugged part, and softens it all into sympathy

pathy and holy love. Thus, *the wisdom that cometh from above*, and guides the penitent heart, is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits* *. Hence arises greater joy to the man pardoned of God; for as the unruly passions of the wicked are, in their very nature, and during their continuance, tormenting, so, on the contrary, the graces of the Spirit that dwell with the penitent, are pleasing and joyful in their nature, as well as in their consequences. Thus, *Blessed* is he whose *transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

THIS blessedness that flows from peace with God, is of a durable nature; it gives prosperity its only true relish; it is a certain defence against adversity; it is the stay and strength of the mind at the hour of death.

Prosperity.

* Jam. iii. 17.

S E R M.

VIII.

Prosperity, the first of these three, is the only season of the false joys of the impenitent; nor even then are they constant. Prosperity makes not every prosperous man happy, nor indeed can it alone make any man happy. It is enjoyed completely by that man only whose mind is at peace, who is in friendship with his Maker, and who receives every good thing as from the hand of his faithful friend;—a circumstance which makes prosperity a real blessing. The stayedness of his temper will not allow him to abuse the gifts of God to his own hurt. He receives them thankfully, he uses them moderately; and when they are taken away, he considers this as done, not by an enemy, but by his Father and all-wise Friend, for his good.

In circumstances of adversity and distress, the influence of this blessedness appears full and strong. When the true penitent is stripped naked of every outward good, when he is rendered incapable of every external pleasure, then his soul takes refuge in the Lord his reconciled Father,

ther; and he feeds and refreshes himself with the enlivening assurance of the Divine favour which his Maker has given him.

S E R M.

VIII

Even in the hour of death, the mercy of God proves the stay of the true penitent. Ever since he obtained right apprehensions of this Divine mercy and turned unto the Lord, his business has been to prepare for that awful hour; and that peace of God which has attended him through the former stages of his Christian course, will not desert him now; but remain by him in the last struggle, and cause him in truth to finish his course with joy.

The two great sources of unhappiness at the hour of death, are regret at parting with favourite objects, and the terroure of future unknown evil. As to the first of these, sorrow for leaving wonted and favourite pleasures; what is it that chiefly occasions this sorrow, and sinks it to the depth of misery, but the consciousness of wanting something better to supply those pleasures?—the feeling

S E R M.
VIII.

of nothing within the mind;—the great, the total blank which the loss of this world occasions? But this can never be the case with the penitent whose sins are pardoned. He feels that he has long had, in his possession a blessedness which the world did not bestow, and which death cannot tear from him. Thus when this world is to him as nothing, and when *his flesh and his heart fail*, he hath nothing to fear; for *God is his strength and his portion for ever. When he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with him; his rod and his staff they comfort him.*

As to the other source of unhappiness at death, the terror of future evil, which is the consequence of sin harboured and retained in the heart, as this is not the case with the true penitent, he cannot be subject to such terror. *The sting of death*, saith the Apostle, *is sin*; but the penitent, persuaded of God's mercy, triumphantly sings;—*Where, O death! is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?* The past, therefore, gives him no pain, seeing his

sins

sins are pardoned ; and the future presents him with the most glorious prospect. The habitual hopes of his soul stretch beyond death to the regions of everlasting light and joy.

SERM.

VIII.

How different is the situation of the impenitent sinner in that season !—to him a season of darkness ! Every thing he desired, every thing he wished for, every thing he rejoiced in is gone, never to return ! That hope of recovering them which, in former afflictions, might be some help to him, is now no more ! and in his soul nothing is now to be found but remorse for what is past, and terrible fears for what is to come. With what horror does it affect even unconcerned spectators, to behold such a helpless—wretched creature, near the close of his life ! with, perhaps, all his senses about him, but these thrown into the utmost confusion, and his soul exceedingly dismayed ?—to behold him pale, ghastly, and trembling with horror ! wistfully casting about every way for relief,—behind, before,

S E R M
VIII

and on all sides of him;—but all in vain! All
—all is desert, and void of comfort!—no rest,
no refuge, no friend without or within him!
every thing hostile and gloomy around him!

What blessedness then must it be to be
delivered from all this horror?—But this is
the portion only of the true penitent, who
reasonably hopes for the mercy of God,
and, after death, finds his hopes realized in
complete fruition!

S E R

S E R M O N IX.

ON THE MISERABLE CONSEQUENCE OF SENSUAL PLEASURE.

ROMANS viii. 6.

—To be carnally minded, is Death.

WITHOUT experience, it would be astonishing to observe how widely men are divided in their opinions of the same things. This opposition of sentiment is nowhere so evident as in cases where religion is concerned. I do not speak here of points of speculation, but of practical truths,—of matters of fact,—of actions and their consequences,—

S E R M.
IX.

S E R M.
IX.

quences,—of the most important concerns of human life. Thus the ambitious man persuades himself that the object of his pursuit is real honour and dignity; while another, viewing it with the cool and enlightened eye of religion, sees that it is nothing but delusion and deceit. He whose heart is inflamed with the thirst of gain, and who devotes himself to the pursuit of it, imagines all the while that this is nothing but a just foresight and wise provision for the time to come; while religion pronounces it to be altogether vanity and vexation of spirit. Amongst the numerous instances that might be produced, the opposition betwixt the sentiments inspired by religion, and those by the love of sensual pleasure, is the most palpable of all. The sensual man is apt, with an air of triumph, to boast of his superiority above the man of temperance and piety, as if himself were by far the happier of the two, and, indeed, sole master of the true taste of life; while, in the other's judgement, he is so far from knowing

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how to live, that he is in truth *dead*!—*dead*, in the most melancholy signification of the word! *To be carnally minded*, says the Gospel, *is Death*.

To justify this assertion, is the design of the present discourse; in which I shall, *first*, Endeavour to explain the character or disposition mentioned in the text; *secondly*, Show how the consequence of it is *Death*; and, *thirdly*, Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM to explain the character of being *carnally minded*.

Here it is proper to observe, that the expression in the original may be rendered, *The vehement desire and habitual pursuit of sensual pleasures*; which pleasures are with great propriety termed *bodily* or *carnal*; as it is in consequence of the union of the soul with the body, that they become the objects of our desire. The human soul is in its own nature a spiritual and uncompounded substance, in-

S E R M.
IX

capable of full enjoyment from any thing that is not pure and spiritual like itself. The genuine delights of the mind consist in the love of God, the practice of religion and virtue, and the due exercise and improvement of its own faculties. In these objects it is chiefly interested; and by its connection with them, contracts an alliance with the world of spirits, and with God Himself, the Lord and Father of all. But, by its union with material organs, it comes to be connected also with the objects of sense and appetite; and so is allied to the inferior and brutal parts of the creation. Hence we consider mankind as a middle species of creatures in the great scale of nature, and as related both to the spiritual and to the corporeal world; partaking of the virtue and nobility of superior beings, on the one hand, and of the instincts and appetites of brutes, on the other. These inferior parts of the human frame are by no means to be accounted blemishes or defects. The gratifications towards which men are disposed, in consequence
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of their union with the body, are proper in this intermediate state; and a prudent and temperate use of them cannot in justice bring any person under the character of *carnal-minded*. That mind only is carnal, which, forgetting the rank it bears in the world, and the dignity of its nature, unsatisfied with a moderate enjoyment of sensual pleasures, delivers itself up to the intemperate pursuit of them, and bends its whole attention to some fancied interest of the body, while matters of spiritual,—of eternal moment, lie quite forsaken and neglected. Now, though the character here mentioned may chiefly relate to sensual gratifications, there is no reason why we should confine our account of it to such only as are strictly so called; for pride, wrath and ambition are without doubt also in the Apostle's view. These are as inconsistent with the real interest of the soul, and fully as injurious to its dignity as the other; and as they almost always have a reference to some bodily pleasure, they may very justly be denominated

S E R M
IX.

nominated *carnal*. Thus a desire of power, in order to provide a more copious nourishment to luxury, seems to be no small ingredient in the ambitious character; and envy and anger are often excited in some minds, because other persons are observed to have larger means of indulging in corporeal pleasures. The greater the license which is given to these gratifications, the more violent of course do the passions grow; and a mind thus disordered, is the fittest soil for producing all manner of vice. Now, in consequence of thus degrading and slavishly addicting himself to those enjoyments which correspond to the inferior parts of his nature, the sensual man gradually loses all relish for the pure and divine entertainments of intellect, and in time contracts an utter aversion to them. *The carnal mind, saith the Apostle, is enmity against God* *. Its possessor cannot bear to think of the perfections of a character,

* Rom. viii. 7.

S E R M
IX

of which he himself is so miserable a reverse. He industriously avoids all those thoughts of the Supreme Being, which might divert him from his unworthy pursuits of pleasure, or damp his relish for them. He lives in a kind of practical atheism; his whole conduct proceeding upon the supposition that he has no dependence on God, and consequently that, with respect to himself, there is no God nor Governor of the world, whatever he may slightly and confusedly believe;—and, if he does really believe, with what reluctance and aversion is he driven to do so? He surveys the infinitely perfect character of God with terror. It is his secret wish that there were no omniscient Eye to observe, and no omnipotent Arm to punish: Or perhaps, (which is the worst of the two) he may fancy the All-perfect God a being like himself, and form the most false and dishonourable apprehensions of his nature, in order to flatter his own perverse appetites, and indulge them, without the fear of controul or punishment. And as this unreasonable

IS E R M. ^{IX.} reasonable propensity to unworthy pleasure,
 and subjection to those passions that are con-
 nected with it, destroy the sense of religion in
 his mind; for the want of this sense of reli-
 gion, reciprocally leaves him in the dark, how
 to guide his life, and regulate his conduct.
 While religion is forgotten, no wonder his
 whole conduct runs into disorder. Those
 powers and affections, in the exercise of which
 he is chiefly concerned, are shamefully al-
 lowed to lie idle and uncultivated; while ho-
 norable appetites are licentiously indulged, and
 unworthy ends are vehemently pursued. In-
 stead of daily cultivating the powers of his un-
 derstanding, he either quite neglects them, or
 meanly prostitutes them to serve some infa-
 mous and abandoned purpose. Such a per-
 son sometimes so far imposes on himself, as to
 imagine that the works of goodness and hu-
 manity are none of his business, and lie out
 of his way; but that sensual indulgence is the
 chief good and supreme enjoyment of life.
 While this engrosses his thoughts, and em-
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S. E. R. N.
IN

pleys his time, he finds no leisure for offices of generosity and beneficence. The sentiments of humanity are drowned amidst the cares of covetousness, the tumult of disorderly affections, and the giddy pursuit of deceitful pleasure. Every maxim in his conduct is formed upon the plan of pleasure or interest, and he hearkens to no passion but what points that way. If hope animates him, it is the prospect of succeeding in these; if fear disturbs him, it is lest they fail, or involve him in danger; if joy inspires him, it arises from their fortunate issue; if grief depresses him, it is from their disappointment; if anger inflames him, it is from the opposition he meets with to his sensual or selfish purposes.

Nor do his passions only conspire to form this odious character. The noble principle of Reason also falls a victim to sensuality and covetousness; and is tamely led to complete their melancholy triumph over the mind. Thus, at last, the whole man is engrossed with the pleasures of vice. These are the only objects

S E X M.
IX.

objects which he aims at, and the uniform pursuit of his life. Such a character is the most unworthy of the reasonable nature of man, its greatest infamy and lowest degradation! And this leads me—

III. To consider the misery which it involves; and to shew that its consequence is *Death*.

No language could be chosen to represent the misery of sin in a more striking manner than this. Had the Apostle said only, that “*to be carnally minded is a disease or poison to the soul;*” even that might seem to be somewhat strong and alarming; but he pronounces it to be *death* itself; not only in the common limited sense, in which it is the worst thing that either diseases or poisons can produce; but death, in its largest extent! Natural death is an object which generally men cannot think of without horror and aversion; and therefore, even in this sense,

it conveys the notion of punishment in a light extremely shocking to the imagination.

S E R M.
IX.

In what follows, however, we shall not confine our view of it to this light only, but consider it according to its common distribution into *natural, spiritual and eternal death*; and endeavour to evince, with regard to each of these acceptations of the word, the truth of the assertion contained in the text, that *to be carnally minded is death*.

I. Sin is deservedly said to expose a man to *natural or corporeal death*. The human body is so framed, that the more immoderately it is gratified, the more it suffers in proportion. There can be nothing more prejudicial to its welfare and health, than habits of licentiousness and intemperance, which generally draw it to an untimely and unnatural dissolution,—to a dissolution almost always preceded by some exquisitely painful and incurable disease. Experience needs only to be appealed to for the truth of this. The most robust

S. E. R. M.
III.

robust constitution, and the soundest natural habit are not found able to hold out long against the fatigues of riot and debauchery. For this reason, a vicious man may be said to be his own murderer. His vices, like a subtle poison, insinuate themselves into the vital parts of his body, and soon reduce it to a carcase; a state—how gloomy and frightful! yet, when considered in a due light, much less so than that which brought it on. Such is the desperate insatiation which possesses these mens hearts, that while they deliver themselves up to sensuality, and are at such mighty pains to gratify and pamper their bodies, they are all the time wearing them out, and hurrying on their dissolution. To pursue pleasure of this kind, is to rush headlong on death. Sensual men love life,—and perhaps they are the fondest lovers of it: But what absurdity is it to value life chiefly on account of its giving opportunity for these gratifications, and yet by these very gratifications to destroy it! To seek for pleasure, and meet
with

with disappointment, is accounted a very mortifying evil, even though nothing worse should follow; but how much more miserable must it be, to go in quest of pleasure, and to meet, not only with disappointment of the grossest sort, but with death itself, armed with its sharpest stings!—But is this all? Does the evil end here? Alas! no. There is a blacker train of miseries accompanying it. What we have now considered is the least of all the evils that sin produces; and *the death of the body* is a misfortune infinitely less formidable than *the death of the soul*; which I proceed—

2. To shew is a consequence of being *carnally minded*. This *spiritual death* discovers itself in a threefold manner; *first*, In the darkness and infamy which the mind more immediately suffers; *secondly*, In ignorance of God, and alienation of the heart from Him; and, *thirdly*, In the inward horrors, and remorse of conscience.

S E R M.

IX

As to the *first* of these, namely, The darkness and infamy which the mind more immediately suffers. By the death of the soul, it cannot be supposed we are to understand an absolute extinction of the rational nature; but something that is worse, the greatest depression and degradation of it. It was observed before, that man is a being interposed as it were between spirit and body, and compounded of both of them;—that, by the former, he stands related to God and the angelic world; but, by the latter, to inferiour beings,—to the brute creation. Now it is obvious that, by the intemperate pursuit of bodily pleasure, man forgets his higher relation, and submits himself to the exercise, or, more properly, to the tyranny, of those parts of his nature by which he resembles the brutes. And surely better were it for him never to have been, or to have been made a brute at first, (in which case such conduct would not have been disagreeable to nature) than thus to forfeit the nobility of his original, and meanly degenerate

S E R M.
IX.

degenerate so far below it. A wise man calls *death* "the deliverance of the soul from the "impressions of sense, and the tyranny of appetite;" and upon this principle, which is so near a-kin to the spirit of the Gospel, may not the thing commonly called *death*, be considered as the very beginning of true life; and the sensual life as the real *death* of the soul?—To view this in another light.

It is a fundamental principle in the natural world, that the death of any thing does not in fact consist in its utter annihilation, but in the change of its form, or in its passing out of one state of being into another. Thus, animal bodies die, when their organised parts dissolve and fall into an undistinguished mass of earth; and for the same reason, may not that Soul be considered as effectually dead, which has divested itself of its reasonable and proper form, assumed the nature of body, and become enslaved to the gross instincts and appetites of a brute? Natural death consists in little else than the separation of the soul

P 2

from

S E R M.

IX

from the body; but this spiritual death consists in their too close intimacy and attachment;—in the soul's meanly stooping to be the servile minister of the body, and of its dishonourable pleasures; delighting in such service, and never entertaining a wish, nor putting forth the least generous effort to shake off the unmanly yoke, and recover its original rights and authority. When bodily appetites thus usurp the seat of power,—when sin gains so great an ascendant, what blindness,—what deformity must ensue? When goodness and humanity, and even reason itself, are in a manner quite rooted up and dismembered from the soul,—what though the animal life may still subsist and perform its functions regularly? the rational life is actually at an end; it is sunk in sensuality or covetousness,—which is inexpressibly worse than annihilation itself.

There is a maxim in nature, which is found to be universally true,—“That the best and
“ noblest things, when once corrupted, are
“ the

"the worst and vilest of all,"—a maxim we find too well verified here. For surely the corruption of the human soul must appear in the more odious light, that it was so pure and illustrious in its original. How abject does the human nature appear under this degeneracy! when the body comes to be the leading principle of the man; and its divine inhabitant is no better than a slave! when, in the emphatic language of scripture, it is *dead in sin*! How melancholy is the consideration! that this fair form, this noblest work of God in the inferior world, should be so disfigured, and so enslaved to the blind appetites of its own servant—the body, and buried amidst the entanglements of gross and senseless matter!

Secondly: This spiritual death consists in ignorance of God, and alienation of the heart from Him. The end of man's formation was that he might be happy in the enjoyment of his Creator. The most divine employment of the soul is to raise itself in aspirations of love and gratitude to the sovereign Lord of

S E R M.
IX.

all things,—the eternal Source of life and love. He is *the Father of lights*, the fountain of happiness, the fulness of all things; the stay and the support of the creation. Without the interposition of his providential care, these beautiful scenes of nature would soon become a cheerless void,—a forlorn and inhospitable wilderness! It is the animating presence of God which ever sustains the universal frame, which disperses life through every portion of it; and it is his inspiring breath which exhilarates the face of nature. *In Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is the Father of our spirits, the God of all consolation, in whom compassions flow.* To have a heart capable of feeling his goodness, to be conscious of admiring and loving Him,—of aspiring to resemble Him, and to enjoy his favour, must be life and happiness indeed! But that soul which has lost all intercourse with this fountain of life, is in effect *dead*,—like a shrunk and withered branch lopped off from the stock from whence it derived its nourishment.

nourishment. As the herbs which grow upon the earth, droop and languish when the Sun withdraws his vital heat, so languishes and degenerates that soul which cannot bend its eyes to the uncreated Source of light,—the Sun of the spiritual world! There can be no light, no happiness without the favour of Heaven. The man who wants this, and has nothing but foul and corrupt thoughts within his breast, is in a manner shut out even from the natural blessings of life; he is a dungeon to himself, and walks in darkness, while the light of the sun shines around him. How gloomy a thing must vice be, which can thus overcast the soul, and intercept the all-glorious perfections of God from its view! How destructive a nature must that thing possess, which can erase every feature of the Divine Image from the soul, and transform this sparkle,—this ray of celestial light, into darkness and deformity itself!—In a word; how miserably blinded is the man, who, instead of rising towards the perfection of his spiritual

S E R M.

IX.

nature, and towards the Divine resemblance, meanly drops into the irrational herd, and mingles his pleasures with the brutes that perish ! But farther :—

In the *third* place : This spiritual death implies the inward guilt and horrors of conscience, which distract the soul while under the power of corruption. These are the sanctions of God's law. Such is the wise constitution of the mind of man, that it naturally suffers pain and remorse, when it reflects on any step it has taken contrary to its real interest or honour. It is formed so as to inflict revenge on itself, for its own crimes, and to carry their punishment within its bosom. Alarming fears, and unrelenting remorse, pursue the guilty wretch wherever he goes. They haunt him in his most silent hours, and frequent his most solitary retreats. To avoid them, it is the common way of sinners to begin the career of wickedness afresh, and seek relief in the very cause of their ruin. Some, in order to escape the unceasing stings of conscience,

science, have been known to lay violent hands on themselves ;—a desperate resource indeed ! to fly from one evil, by plunging into another ten thousand times greater. This, however, serves well to shew that a situation which has driven some, in the agonies of despair, to fly to death for refuge, must be inexpressibly more dreadful than death itself.

Perhaps, indeed, there may be some wicked men, who seldom feel these inward pangs ;—whose souls may be like the body, where the vital parts are not the most exquisitely sensible. But there is no wicked man, even though grown hardened and inveterate in the constant practice of sin, who is not sometimes forced to reflect, with the bitterest convictions, on the deformity of his nature, and the unconquerable wicked habits he has contracted ;—on the favour of Heaven he has forfeited, and the unspeakable punishment in another world, he has so great reason to dread. Such reflections as these may raise such a tempest within him, as if the fire of hell was already raging

S E R M.
IX.

ging in his bowels : And then, to what hand he should turn him for relief, he knoweth not. Every thing he sees, he fancies his enemy. He finds no light,—no comfort ! He is a fugitive from God, an outcast from nature, a terrour to himself, and every thing is hostile around him !

3. In the *last* place, and what swells this account of misery to the utmost : Those impure exercises of sin, expose the soul to *eternal death*. Nature itself has, in some measure, brought this momentous doctrine to light. The moral character of God, and the present irregular distribution of things, intimate a state hereafter, when every inequality shall be balanced, and made even. Experience here gives some countenance to these intimations of reason. We see the punishments of sin already begun, and the avenging justice of God actually put forth, in this world, against the bold transgressors of his laws. And is there not a strong presumption that God will carry on a plan, which is already beginning to unfold

fold itself, and that He will continue in the next world, what He has begun in this *? The authority of Divine Revelation puts this matter beyond all question. Thus; the wicked *shall go into everlasting punishment †. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power ‡.* What a deplorable pass is this? To be condemned to endure an eternity of woe, and that without the shortest pause, or the least remission!—without the smallest probability of a period, or the faintest prospect of an escape! Happy for a wicked man, would it then be, if death would lay its hand upon him, and put an end to his existence and misery together! Utter extinction of being, which he shuddered at the thoughts of in this world, he will then invoke as his greatest relief, and his most inestimable blessing.

* See this stated at greater length in the Sermons on the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future Judgment.

† Matt. xxv. 46.

‡ 2 Theff. i. 9.

S E R M
IX

bleffing. But his prayer will not be heard. Death, indeed, he fhall find; but one of no fuch gentle nature as to deftroy him; one that hath a power to torment, but none to kill. If he lives, it is but to fuffer,—and to fuffer fuch dreadful things, that all the miferies of human life, and all the kinds of death ever men endured here, in comparifon, vanifh into nothing. *Who can dwell with everlafting torment?*—Thus have I endeavoured to illuftrate the character in the text, and fhew its miferable confequences. I now come,

III. To make fome improvement of the whole.

It is to be obferved, that fuch descriptions cannot be thought improperly addreffed to the circumftances of any perfon whatever. The very beft hearts among us, by an impartial attention to themfelves, muft be fenfible of inward corruption, and of propenfions pushing them on to the indulgence of vitious appetites. We are all children of the fame common parents,

rents, whose original corruption has descended through all their posterity, and mixes its infection with our blood. Let not, therefore, any man boast himself of his virtue. *Let every one that standeth, take heed, lest he fall.* Let us seek the grace and assistance of God, to keep us ever awake, and on our guard. The delusion of pleasure may otherwise steal upon us, and sin erect its throne in our hearts. We know the consequences of this,—the sad indignity our natures must undergo,—the loss we must sustain of likeness to God, and of the communications of his favour, and all the inexpressible miseries which follow. This train of evils deserves the attention of all,—even of the just and virtuous, to keep them steady to that character.

But what shall be said to draw the attention of him, who without consideration or concern devotes his heart to sensuality, and spends his days in all the extravagance of vice? How miserably, my brother, dost thou deceive thyself! To love God, to do his will,

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S E R M.
IX.

to enjoy his favour, and an approving conscience, is the only way to be happy. But whither art *thou* wandering? Seest thou not the ruin that threatens thee, and the terrible figures of Death that are before thee? Or, if thou art not aware of these, attend at least to the shameful state of thy mind. Think what thou feelest, when thou reflectest on thy sinful deeds; and how worthless thou art in the sight of God;—nay, even in thine own eyes. Consider that, by base pursuits, thou renoucest the favour of the Almighty, and the esteem of wise and good men;—that, by chusing these, thou consentest to become an exile from God,—a voluntary exile!—a fatherless and friendless soul! with nothing to rely on, either in the hours of reflection, or of distress;—nothing to stand by thee,—nothing but these deep contracted habits of sin, which it is likely, indeed, may never abandon thee, till they have rendered thy ruin irretrievable!

S E R.

S E R M O N X.

ON OUR UNFITNESS TO JUDGE OF OUR
OWN CONDITION IN LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES vi. 12.

*For who knoweth what is good for Man in
this Life?*

MOST men fondly indulge the fancy, that if their condition were changed in the manner they could point out, they would be much happier than they now are. Hence they give way to envy against their more prosperous neighbours, arraign the ways of Providence as partial, arbitrary, and unjust; and refuse to submit with a willing mind to
its

S E R M.
X.

S E R M.

X

its appointments. They thus effectually deprive themselves of the true happiness which is within their reach, and is the result of acquiescing readily in the will of God, and of keeping all his commandments faithfully. To correct this ill-founded notion, That men are fully qualified to judge and chuse what is good for them in this life, is one purpose of Solomon in this Book. With that view, he considers the pursuits after power, wealth, fame, and pleasure, which men severally engage in with keenness, as if they thought them unquestionably for their good; and shows that their expectations are uniformly disappointed, and that all similar expectations will have the same fate. Hence the conclusion which he draws, *That the true wisdom of men, is to fear God, and keep his commandments*; leaving it to the Almighty, to determine their lot in the world, as the only competent Judge of what is good for them.

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THE words of the text lead us particularly to the consideration of our own ignorance in this respect; which we now proceed to illustrate, by shewing that, in order to judge aright of what is good for us, it would be necessary, *First*, To have a clear discernment of the strength of our mind and resolution, that we may know what degrees of temptation they are able to resist, and overcome: *Secondly*, To have a like perfect insight into our particular temper, to which our circumstances must be adapted: And, *thirdly*, To foresee, with equal certainty, all the consequences, both near and remote, of the condition that appears to us most desirable; in all which we must acknowledge ourselves very ignorant.

S E R M.

X

I. IN order to judge aright of what is good for us, it would be necessary to have a clear discernment of the strength of our mind and resolution, that we may know what degrees of temptation they are able to resist and overcome. For without such knowledge, we might

VOL. I.

Q

readily

S E R M.
X.

readily judge a situation good for us, which would produce temptations too strong for our virtuous resolutions, and, by destroying our integrity, lay the foundation of misery deep in our hearts.

Now, though it may be imagined that, if we can know any thing distinctly, we may know ourselves; yet it will be found, in fact, that there are few things in which mankind are more liable to be mistaken; the application necessary for acquiring that knowledge to the degree in which it may be acquired, being so seldom used, and the ways men have of deceiving themselves, being so many. Even those who have been at the greatest pains to obtain a full insight into their own characters, have, on many occasions, found themselves mistaken. It is no uncommon thing to see men who, with a moderate share of prosperity, of fortune, health, and reputation, behave themselves tolerably well; but no sooner are they placed in a more flattering situation, than they lose that virtue which, from ignorance

rance of themselves, they were ready to boast
 of as invincible. Did we ourselves never find
 our good resolutions broken, to our own sur-
 prise, not only by unexpected and singular,
 but by common and slight, temptations? Have
 we not sometimes, after forming a fair and
 worthy design of adhering inflexibly to truth
 and virtue, with high confidence that nothing
 should defeat our purpose; and this too after,
 as we thought, sufficiently guarding against
 the difficulties that might occur;—have we
 not, I say, sometimes, without any severe
 trial of our virtue, found our seemingly firm
 resolution gradually undermined, and at last
 overturned, and our ill-founded confidence
 exposed to shame? Some persons, because they
 have been enabled to conquer temptations of a
 particular nature, and degree of force, may be
 apt to fancy that their hearts are sufficiently
 confirmed in virtue, and can hardly meet with
 any temptation that shall prove too strong for
 them. Such persons forget that what has often
 proved true with regard to others, may likewise

S E R M.
X.Q²

prove

S E R M.

X

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prove so with regard to themselves. They may be so far confirmed in goodness, as to overcome temptations of ordinary and limited force; they may be honest and upright to a certain degree, but beyond this, their virtue, if put to the trial, will give way. Is it not a common and humbling reflection, "That few men are to be much trusted?" The meaning of this is not, that most men are deliberately and knowingly unfaithful,—that there is little or no honesty and fidelity among mankind (it is to be hoped there is a great deal of these—to a certain degree); but that there are few who will stand the test of a severe trial, and whose integrity will not give way, very contrary to their own fond opinion of themselves. In most men, some latent passion lies long concealed in the heart, till strong and alluring circumstances rouse it. Then the lurking enemy breaks forth from ambush, too strong for the Man, and lays his fancied virtue prostrate.

This

S E R M.
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This is no imaginary supposition. Frequent instances of it occur. A most remarkable one is related in Scripture of Hazael, one of the chief men about the court of Benhadad King of Syria, by whom he had been sent to Elisah the prophet, to enquire if the King *should recover* from the disease under which he then lay : *So Hazael went to meet the Prophet, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, " Shall I recover of this disease ?" — And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, " Thou mayest certainly recover : " — Howbeit, the Lord hath shewed me, that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was asbamed ; and the man of God wept. — And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord ? and the Prophet answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel : Their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with*

S E R M.
X.

*the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.—And Hazael said, But what? is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing *?—While temptations are at a distance, Hazael feels an abhorrence at the thoughts of such cruelty, thinks it impossible he can ever commit such barbarous deeds, rejects the imputation with horror, and confidently challenges the Prophet for thinking and speaking so vilely of him. The only reply the Prophet makes, is, *The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be King over Syria.* When this event took place, when he acquired possession of the throne, and of absolute power, which raised him above being accountable for his actions,—with this change of his condition, the man himself was changed, or more properly speaking, his real character, formerly unknown to himself, was more fully disclosed, the inhumanity of his heart, which hitherto lay hid from him, discovered itself,*

self, and what the Prophet foresaw, was completely fulfilled.

S E R M.
X

Upon the whole, it appears, that on account of the deceitfulness of our hearts, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to attain a perfect insight into the strength of our mind and resolution. This ought not, however, to discourage us from endeavouring to acquire such knowledge of ourselves, as is requisite for the direction of our conduct; and the degree of it which is necessary for this end, may, by study and attention, be obtained. But as the Almighty never intended that our condition should be solely of our own choosing, so neither can we ever attain to that perfect knowledge of ourselves, which alone could qualify us to make a right choice. We cannot know *what is good for man in this life*: And the proper use we are to make of our ignorance of what is good, is—not to lean to our own understanding, not to think more highly of it than we ought, not to entertain the absurd fancy, that, if we had

Q 4

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E R M.

X

power, we could correct the ways of the Most High ; but to resign ourselves to his disposal, to revere Him, and keep all his commandments.

II. THAT we may judge aright of what is good for us, it would be necessary to have a perfect insight into our particular temper, to which our circumstances must be adapted.

In order to our being happy and satisfied, our condition must be suited to our temper and disposition. As the external objects of our senses and affections are many and various, so the tempers and dispositions of men are greatly diversified. What suits one temper, does not equally accord with another. What is agreeable and advantageous to one, is sometimes disagreeable and hurtful to another. Without a perfect knowledge, then, of our temper, we cannot determine what circumstances will exactly correspond to it. The very same things which we fancy make other persons happy, and which, for that reason, we wish to have in our possession, might have

a contrary effect on us, and render us extremely miserable.

S E R M.
X.

Were it left to men to chuse their own condition in the world, they would no doubt make choice of every thing that seemed to themselves most agreeable. According to their several inclinations, they would betake themselves—some to riches, others to honour; some to fame, and others to power; but all to health and pleasure uninterrupted. All manner of pain, sickness, disease, want, disgrace, would for ever be removed. No anxious care, no disappointment would be suffered to interrupt their enjoyment. They would have nothing to do but to bask under the sunshine of an unclouded prosperity.—But can it be asserted, that all this would afford continued satisfaction? Are men so made as to enjoy a perpetual round of pleasure, with any degree of relish? Are they not liable to satiety and weariness?—not to mention that prosperity daily destroys foolish men, and is daily making men fools,—making them thoughtless and

S E R M.

X

and vicious? Are they sure that their minds would continue undisturbed in so flattering a situation?—Our happiness must be founded in tranquillity of mind and real self command. When therefore we desire or obtain any thing that has an engaging aspect, are we certain that our hearts will remain undisturbed in the possession? May not this object of our wishes break our constancy, and trouble our repose? May it not contain some concealed temptation, which will enervate our minds, and open a source of disquiet which we were happily strangers to before? For such is the nature of man, that even when there is nothing without him that ought to give him uneasiness, he can create trouble to himself from vain fears of future disasters, and still vainer hopes and wishes for something beyond what he has yet got into his possession. *The eye, saith the scripture, is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing*, neither he that loveth silver is satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth*

* Eccl. i. 8.

loveth abundance with increase, because that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

S E R M.
X.

We are apt to imagine a great many advantages in every thing we wish for; but should we not ask ourselves—"Do we also see the "disadvantages and troubles?" For every state or condition in life has both; every thing is possessed of a fair and of a dark side. If then we imagine, that what we set our hearts upon is altogether fair and agreeable, and free from inconvenience, we certainly deceive ourselves. Should we allege that we have examined the object of our desires with impartiality, weighed all its disadvantages with care, and find them greatly overbalanced by its good; have we not still reason to suspect the justness of this conclusion? Are we so perfectly acquainted with the nature of the thing,—how it will correspond to the strength and the temper of our minds, as to put it out of all question that its good surpasses its ill? Every thing, as has been observed,

* Eccl. i. 15. v. 10.

S E R M.
X

ved, has two faces, of which the one is engaging, and the other forbidding; and we find that our passionate desire for any object, throws its disagreeable aspect into the shade, disguises it, or even arrays it in charms,—charms, however, which are borrowed and fanciful, existing no where but in our own deluded imagination. And is not our imagination ever ready to impose on us, ever intruding beyond its sphere, and leading us astray? Do we not frequently find, that many things appear to be adorned with allurements infinitely more charming when seen at a distance, than they really possess, when they come into our power? Nay, are not our hopes sometimes entirely frustrated, when objects, from which we expected the highest satisfaction, produce only pain and distress? Men can acquire knowledge from experience only. God alone knows the nature of all things so intimately as to adjust them to each other in the best manner; and therefore to his arrangements ought we readily to submit.

To

S E R M.
X.

To these considerations add this, That the highest pleasures God has made us capable of, are those of religion and virtue. We are also capable of others, which are useful for unbending the mind, and which contribute to the convenience of our passage through life. Our chief danger arises from such an intemperate indulgence in the gratifications of the animal life, as shall cause us to neglect the others of a higher nature; nay, to forget that the mind hath pleasures peculiar to itself, which are far more properly our own. Hence the great difficulty of knowing what condition is best for man in this life; because we cannot judge what condition would be most favourable for procuring us the enjoyment of the pleasures of religion and virtue. For before we can acquire such knowledge, all the difficulties formerly mentioned must be removed; and that self-knowledge which is requisite to teach us how every circumstance would suit our temper, our passions, and our strength of mind, must be previously acquired: And this we must confess

S E R M.
X.

confess to be a task impracticable by us; and therefore we must be ignorant of what is good for us in this life.

III. In order to know and judge aright what is good for us, it is necessary we should foresee all the consequences, both near and remote, of the condition that appears to us most desirable; but of these we must acknowledge ourselves to be very ignorant.

In general, the consequences of things are placed far out of our reach. With respect to some particular things, of which we may have had experience, we may see with tolerable clearness, that, should they befall us, or should we foolishly make choice of them, they would almost certainly produce misery; but this is by no means the case with many things that have an agreeable appearance. We seldom can know whether their consequences will prove pleasing or painful;—for our advantage or otherwise. There is a close connection and dependence of one thing upon another, concealed

vealed from our discernment, by which one event gives birth to a variety of others, and extends its influence to a remote distance; just as we see one single imprudent or wicked action bring infamy on the head of him who commits it, draw after it a long train of misery, and sometimes extend its influence to his unhappy posterity. Unless then we could see through the chain of events, and trace all the effects of any desired situation, we cannot determine what is good for us,—either with respect to this life, or to a future one.

1. We do not know what condition would in its effects prove good for us in the present life. By experience we are taught, that an object may in itself be agreeable, but in its effects very bitter. Many things for which we have an earnest desire, and which not only may appear highly deserving of our affection, but in fact prove so for a considerable time after they have been in our possession, yet in their consequences may prove to the last degree distressing. To give one instance:—It is most natural
for

S E R M.

X

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for an affectionate parent to promise himself real and lasting satisfaction in his children; and for some time they may prove the greatest joy and comfort of his heart. But my brethren, may it not happen, that the most promising children, whom the fond parent regards as the greatest blessing, shall become the occasion of his greatest pain? May they not, alas! by their misconduct, bring disgrace and dishonour upon themselves, and on *him* too, from the sympathy of his heart for them; and thus *bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave?* But suppose, that the conduct of children continues not only blameless, but commendable, may not some melancholy accident render them unhappy in themselves? and will not this unhappiness communicate itself to the tender heart of the parent? While the youth are advancing in knowledge and wisdom as they advance in years; while the most virtuous dispositions appear in all they say and in all they do; while every eye that sees them blesses them, and every tongue re-
peats

peats their praise and congratulates the happy parent, whose heart blesses God, and whose eyes run over with tears of joy at every renewed proof of their virtues;—may they not suddenly be snatched from him by the hand of death?—and who can tell what pain shall then wring the parent's heart?—True; children may long continue a great blessing, and while they do well, perhaps they are the greatest blessing in this life; but who can promise on this? And we must acknowledge that this uncertainty belongs to every thing in the world: The most favourite object may, for any thing we know, carry a sting in its bosom, which shall give a fatal wound to our repose! Who then can know what is good for him in this life? Can any man see into futurity? Can he foresee all the effects of any particular situation, so as effectually to avoid such as are unhappy? Vain man! confess thy ignorance, and leave to God the disposal of thy condition in life, with entire submission to his will.

S E R M.

2. As we do not know what condition would in its effects, be good for us in this life, neither can we know what condition would produce consequences of salutary influence on our future state. The consequences of our present condition are not confined to our situation here, but by the influence they have on our heart and conduct, they reach beyond the grave. We are travelling through this world to another and a better one, for which we are now in a state of preparation. God has placed us here to acquire a temper, and confirm a character fit for heaven. This temper consists in entire submission to Him, in purity of affection, and in established habits of holiness and virtue. Now; before experience, we know nothing at all of the consequences of any situation in this respect. Suppose a man to enter into this world with a maturity of judgement and understanding, if such a supposition could be made;—but however, suppose him all at once endowed with a capacity equal to what full grown men generally

ly possess. Even such a man would have to learn what effects outward things have on the mind; just as all of us have to do in childhood and youth: And, with all our experience, we can know but very partially what circumstances will be most favourable for our growth in grace; what will most effectually conduce to the right government of our passions, tend to moderate our regard to the present passing objects, and improve in us a heavenly temper; or, on the contrary, what will strengthen vicious dispositions, and a slavish attachment to those objects. Known to God only are all these things, who has thought it proper to employ afflictions as the necessary means of training us up for a better world;—necessary, most undoubtedly, we must conclude them to be, otherwise our heavenly Father would never have ordained them. Though, on first thoughts, we may be apt to consider them as very untoward means for answering this end, yet, on mature reflection, even we ourselves may be sen-

S E R M.

X.

fible of the necessity and usefulness of afflictions for this purpose.

FROM all that has been said, it may now appear, with some degree of evidence, that no man can know what situation will prove good for him; and that we are not qualified for chusing a condition in the world, such as shall be every way best for us. To all this, some discontented person may object:—"I grant that I cannot chuse a condition in every respect the best for me; yet I am persuaded, if I had the power, I could change my present circumstances much to the better, for every good purpose. I am convinced my present afflictions are much greater than is necessary. A more moderate degree of them, or a different kind, would have a much better effect." But does not every one see, at first glance, that this is talking altogether at random; for as *afflictions do not spring from the dust, or arise out of the ground;* as they are not the work of fate, or of blind chance,

chance, so neither do they proceed from erroneous judgement, or defective goodness; but are ordered by the Supreme Governour of the world, with unerring wisdom, for the real good of his creatures.

As the Providence of God is concerned for the good of the world in general, so we must conclude, from his perfect and impartial goodness, that it extends to every individual. The Divine Providence is therefore particular, as well as universal; and as the general afflictions of mankind are calculated for the good of the whole species, so those of every particular person are best suited to his character,—are best for him every way. This is one of the plainest deductions which human reason can make from the wisdom and goodness of God. Yet, notwithstanding the justness of the conclusion, every man is backward to acknowledge it, with respect to his own case. Our self-love here most unreasonably strikes in, and urges us to complain of our condition, as if it were distressing beyond measure, and exceedingly un-

S E R M.
X.

equal; and to allege that we are dealt with hardly, and much worse than our neighbours.

But were we allowed and enabled to change our condition as we pleased, we should certainly, in making use of that power, find our misery in our folly. Every state of life has its troubles. These, of one kind or other, are unavoidable; and the present trouble seems to us to be the greatest, not that it is really in itself the most intolerable, but our present feeling of it induces us to think so, and is the cause of our fore complaints of its excess. If we murmur and repine in one state, no change into any other, will remove that discontented disposition; but we shall continue to complain of our situation, in spite of every change, as if it were still most unhappy. Were all mankind, or any society of men, with consent, to barter conditions with each other, each hoping to gain by such a change; as every state has its troubles, so every man would find the distresses he had thus newly acquired, however light they might have appeared to him, when,

when, at a distance, he compared them with his former sufferings,—every such man, I say, would find his new troubles far more unsuitable to himself, than to the person for whom they were first intended, and far more unsuitable to him than his own, which, by an unerring Providence, were wisely adapted to his character. It must appear then evidently our greatest wisdom, to acquiesce in God's disposal of us; never to disturb ourselves, or lose our time in unreasonable complaints of the hardness of our lot; but to consider what advantages are to be found in it, (for there is no state without advantages) and to improve these to the best of our power.

THE sum of all that has been said is, That we are very ignorant what circumstances would yield us most satisfaction in this life; what would best agree with our temper, the force of our passions, and the strength of our minds and resolution; what in their effects would prove vexatious or agreeable; and that

S E R M.

X.

we are still more ignorant of the remoter consequences of our circumstances,—remoter consequences both in this and the future state. For though by experience we may learn some of these, yet far the greatest part of them lies beyond the reach of our penetration; and our ignorance must thus disqualify us for chusing a proper condition for ourselves. It is not meant to say that we cannot mend our circumstances at all. This the Almighty has enabled us to do, in as far as we can guard against things that are hurtful,—things that experience hath taught us to be pernicious. It is only asserted, that we cannot select such a general condition in life, as would certainly conduce to our satisfaction and improvement. Let the man most confident of his own understanding, ask himself the few following questions:—“ Do I certainly
 “ know that those situations which I think
 “ most agreeable and desirable, and therefore
 “ wish to be placed in, might not disclose
 “ temptations too strong for my virtue, and
 “ endanger,

“endanger, nay ruin, my best interest en-
“tirely? When I look round me through
“the world, I see numbers of men corrupt-
“ed and sunk by prosperity, to the level of
“brutes. Were I then placed in a like trying
“situation, am I strong enough, and so firm-
“ly established in virtue, as to withstand the
“solicitations of pleasure and of riches, the
“sly and insinuating charms of flattery, or
“all the dangers of greatness; and retain my
“integrity in the midst of them all? Am I
“strong enough to pass safe and unhurt,
“through all those rocks and shelves on
“which so many of my brethren have split,
“and made shipwreck of both present and
“future happiness? Or can I say that any
“other condition, however apparently more
“eligible it may be, would prove more fa-
“vourable than my present one, for virtuous
“improvement, and for qualifying me to en-
“joy, with full relish, the happiness of a fu-
“ture and better world?” Let any man se-
riously put such questions to himself, and I
doubt

S E R M.

X

doubt not his heart will tell him, that his judgement cannot be trusted, and that he will feel, whether he own it or not, an inward testimony of his ignorance.

WHAT then is the conclusion of the whole matter, but that, considering our own ignorance, and the wisdom and goodness of God, we resign ourselves entirely to Him? We see that if we were empowered to change our condition, according to our fancy, we should in all probability do it much for the worse. Where then is there ground for complaint? Consider, O man! ere thou suffer thyself to complain, who appointed thy present condition? Was it not the perfect Ruler of the universe, whose goodness cannot err, and knows no change? Whatever We, short sighted mortals! vainly imagine to be wrong, hard, or unequal, is all mistake. There is,—there can be nothing wrong in the works of God. Whatever is ordained by Him is right,—absolutely right. It is impossible that the infinitely perfect Being,

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can do any thing weak, unjust or oppressive.

S E R M.

X

Holy he is in all his works, righteous and merciful in all his ways.

Let us then, if we would act as wisdom directs, commit ourselves to God; and leave it to Him to judge what condition is most for our good; resting satisfied, that if pleasure and success be for our advantage, we shall have them; if otherwise, they will be withheld, and only what is convenient will be given us. Man is not dearer to himself than he is to God. No parent has so strong an affection for his children, as God has for us all; especially dear to Him are his saints, who readily acquiesce in all his determinations, and whose chief concern is to fill, with the most unwearied attention and fidelity, the station in which He has placed them. Wisdom calls upon us to direct our concern and industry to objects on which our actions can produce some effect; and the objects on which they have the greatest effect, are our own hearts and characters. These therefore require our chief

S E R M.

chief attention. We must confess, however, that the common conduct of mankind is just the reverse of this. Their thoughts, reflection, study and diligence are chiefly employed upon their outward condition, while their dispositions and character are left, in a great measure, to accident. It is true, that God has, in some degree, subjected our condition here to our own power, and to the influence of our behaviour, and that it often depends on ourselves, whether we shall enjoy the conveniencies and comforts of life or not; and hence the propriety of bestowing a reasonable proportion of our care on these things; hence the necessity of prudence, justice and activity for securing them, as far as possible; which still points out our conduct and real character to be the chief object of our concern.

But as no attention on our part, can absolutely secure our possession of present conveniencies, and as we cannot foresee what effects the continued possession of them might have on our minds, it is clearly our proper part,

part, to acknowledge our ignorance of what is good for us in this life, to submit to the will of God, and the appointments of his unerring wisdom, and to apply ourselves to what is our peculiar province, the study and practice of piety and virtue. So shall our temper be best suited to the present uncertain state of all outward things, so, in the midst of misfortune, shall we escape far the sharpest part of its pain,—remorse of conscience, and the reflection that our distress is the fruit of our own misdoings. So also shall we be qualified thus to address our Maker: “Order my lot, O
“God! as seemeth good in thy sight. Raise
“me up or set me low; appoint me to act
“as master or as servant; bestow on me
“riches or fame, or honour; or reduce me
“to struggle with poverty, disgrace or mis-
“fortune; confine me to home, or send me
“to wander among strangers; preserve to me
“my friends and other earthly comforts, or
“take them from me; my principal care
“shall be, by my ready resignation to thy
“will,

S E R M.
X

" will, and by the integrity of my conduct, to
 " vindicate thy ways to men, and approve
 " myself to Thee, who art my God, my Sa-
 " viour, and my eternal Friend !"

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SECRET

S E R M O N XI.

ON THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS.

I. SAMUEL ii. 7. b

*The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He
bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

RESIGNATION to the will of God, kind affection to our fellow creatures, and tranquillity within our own minds, are qualities essential to our happiness; and there is nothing perhaps that more generally weakens and destroys these qualities amongst men, than inattention to the truth asserted in the text, *That the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; bringeth low, and lifteth up:—That*
He

S E R M.
XI

S E R M.

XI.

He who is perfectly wise and good, is the Author of these different conditions in which men are placed in this world. This inattention gives frequent occasion to rash and violent reflections against the goodness of Providence; and it is the general distinction amongst men, into high and low, rich and poor, which most commonly produces, on the part of the rich, either pride and violence, or contempt and cold indifference; and on that of the poor, discontent and envy, or iniquity and fraud. Thus the bands of society are loosened, its important end neglected and defeated, the goodness of God blasphemed, and men rendered unhappy. The truth asserted in the text, suggests the true remedy for these complicated evils: *The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up.* By *poor*, we are here to understand chiefly those industrious men, who earn their subsistence by daily labour; and not merely those who are reduced to a state of absolute indigence, by infirmity or disease.

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If we allow ourselves to think deliberately on the subject, we shall be satisfied that this distribution of mankind into *high and low, rich and poor*, must be right; because it is the doing of an All-perfect Being. Can He, whose excellence and happiness are incapable either of addition or of diminution, have any other object, in the preservation and government of the world, than the good of his creatures? Can we suppose Him to be led by partiality, in dispensing his favours, or, while we are persuaded of his designing the good of all, can we imagine that He is capable of mistaking the most proper establishments for that purpose? Can He who has displayed such consummate wisdom in the frame and construction of the universe, err in his conduct to mankind? Can the Author of our being, the Framer of our nature, be ignorant of what is most proper for securing and advancing its happiness? As it is evident that none of these suppositions can be admitted, what conclusion are we to draw,

S E R M.

XI

but that all the Divine appointments are both wise and good ; and that the different conditions which God has established amongst men, are necessary for their welfare ? This general conclusion, which is so obvious, ought to render us contented with our condition in the world, and to banish all complaints against the conduct of Providence, although we cannot assign the causes of particular parts of it.

But these reflections will derive additional force from this consideration, That we can discern good reasons in general for the appointed inequality in the condition of mankind.

WHEREFORE, in prosecuting this subject, we shall ; *First*, Endeavour by several arguments, to point out the usefulness, and indeed the necessity of different ranks and conditions amongst men : *Secondly*, By comparing the advantages and disadvantages of these different conditions, shew,—That for the purpose of obtaining the true happiness of men, they are nearly on a level : And, *thirdly*, Conclude with
some

some reflections, which the subject naturally suggests. S E R M.
XL

I. WE have to shew the usefulness and necessity of different ranks and conditions amongst mankind.

1. Men cannot be happy, excepting in the proper exercise of their rational faculties, and the proper direction and exercise of their affections; and, in order to promote such exercise, they must be placed in a situation that gives opportunity for it. In a solitary state, no such opportunity can be found. There, mens talents are not called forth, and their affections find not their proper objects. Men are evidently made for society, and there only they find a field for the display of all their powers and affections.

In order to the well-being of society, the first thing requisite is, that men possess the means of subsistence, which can be obtained only by human labour and exercise, employed in tilling the ground or traversing the woods

S E R M.

XL

and waters in quest of them. God has richly stored the world with food convenient for man; but has, at the same time, wisely and kindly ordained that he shall not have it without labour, and without the application of care and reflection, of skill and industry, of patience and constancy of mind. Thus God Almighty has so disposed of all things, that while men are seeking only the necessary means of preserving their lives, they unavoidably find enjoyment in the exercise of their activity. They answer, in part, the end of life, while they labour only to preserve it; and this first necessary work of men, must at all times occupy a great proportion of their number; amongst whom, although by nature equal, differences will soon appear, according to the different degrees of judgement, skill, and diligence, which they discover. For the providing of food, clothing and habitation necessary for men, requires the use both of their head and hands; and to prevent confusion, it is evidently proper that different persons

S E R M.

XL

sons be chiefly employed in each of these departments. Hence the distinction of masters and servants; of some to direct, and others to be directed; of some to command, and others to obey; and of *high and low*, and *rich and poor* also, in consequence of the different degrees of their application and success.

2. Human society cannot subsist, unless each man's person, and his property, the fruit of his labour, be secure; unless violence, fraud, and injustice, be restrained, and general tranquillity and order be supported. For these purposes, there is a necessity for the institution of wise laws and regulations. The framing of these, requires the attention and exertion of men of superior understanding, who are placed in circumstances that allow them to employ their time and thought on this important object, without distraction, arising from the care of their own subsistence. Hence the distinction of Senators and Lawgivers.

Again: When laws are once made, they can avail nothing, unless uniformly and steadily

S E R M.

XI

put in execution ; and for this purpose, particular persons must be set apart, and entrusted with power and authority, to enforce obedience to them. Hence the great distinction of Magistrate and Subjects.

Farther : As men are apt, from prejudice, from passion, and from mistaken interest, to do wrong ; and, as good order requires that the persons injured shall not decide in their own cause, and redress their own wrongs, there is an evident necessity for another distinction, to wit, that of Judges, who having no interest to pervert their judgement, may decide betwixt the contending parties,—betwixt the highest and the lowest, with impartiality ; according to the established laws of the society.

When men behave worthily in these elevated stations, when all partake of the blessings of their integrity and public spirited care, they unavoidably become the objects of general respect and esteem. Are not all men disposed to admire wisdom, when employed for the purposes of justice and generosity? Are they

they not forward to express their veneration for these qualities, and to distinguish the possessors of them by every mark of respect? Hence distinctions take place amongst men of another kind than those already mentioned, to wit, outward titles of honour, to preserve the memory of the esteem in which they were held; and places of profit, to promote the comfort and conveniency of persons who have deserved so well of the State. These distinctions are the willing tribute of a grateful people to their benefactors, and are cheerfully transmitted from father to son, to be perpetual memorials of their regard for true merit. In consequence of this transmission of outward honours to the posterity of those who first obtained them as the reward of merit, and the mark of real esteem, it no doubt too often happens that they come into the possession of those who have no merit of their own. This consequence, however, cannot justly be complained of as wrong, when we consider the

S E R M.

XI.

origin from whence it arose,—the just regard due to integrity, wisdom, and public spirit.

It must indeed be acknowledged, that men do not always act agreeably to the end and spirit of the station in which God has placed them. No doubt a member of the Supreme Council of a nation, though appointed to watch over the public interest, may employ all his time, reflection, skill, and industry, in promoting a private interest of his own, not only separate from, but contrary to that of the public. No doubt a judge may at a time be found, who, through criminal inattention, may mistake the side on which justice lies; or, though he discerns it, may, through corruption of heart, and base partiality, give judgement against it. But shall we, from these reasons, conclude that it would be better there were neither senators, magistrates, nor judges in the land? that all ranks were levelled, that all men might live as they listed, and consequently mere force carry every thing before it? Whatever comes under the management

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of men, is liable to abuse; the best institutions in the world, suffer in their hands; but surely this is not a good reason for suppressing and dismissing them entirely. On account of the good purposes which they are calculated to serve, such abuses of them as cannot, after the most vigorous efforts, be corrected, ought, in reason, to be endured. Whatever degree of just indignation, particular malversations in useful office, may excite in our minds, it would surely be the height of folly to suppress the office itself. Whatever contempt or indignation we may feel against men who abuse their power, or their wealth, to their own, or their neighbour's hurt, it would surely be very unwise to determine that no man should be allowed to possess more than another, notwithstanding the most manifest superiority of skill and industry; or to determine to do what must render the rights and properties of men altogether insecure. This would be just such madness, as if men should agree to reject the religion of our Lord, because sometimes

S E R M.
XI

sometimes even this unspeakable gift of God hath been so abused and perverted, as to become, in many places, a dreadful scourge to the human race. It is not from any particular wrong application of any appointment, that we are to form an opinion of its propriety; but from its spirit, manifest tendency and common effect. Taking this rule for our guide then, we must be convinced that the distinction of *high and low, rich and poor*, among men, is not only very useful, but absolutely requisite for the well-being of human society.

3. The well-being of society not only requires internal security, but defence from external violence and hostile invasion; and as a distinction of rank and distribution of authority are necessary for the former, they are equally so for the latter. As members of the same community are liable to encroach on each others rights, from interest, passion, and lust of power; so nations are, from similar motives, induced to attack each other. No nation

tion can be happy then unless it have both good government within itself, and force sufficient to repel assaults from without. For this purpose, it is requisite that particular persons be raised to stations of eminence, men possessed of wisdom, to direct, and of authority, to exert the force of the state entrusted to them, for the public defence. This lays another foundation for distinctions of rank amongst men; and when such persons employ their wisdom, courage, and patience with success and zeal for the good of their country, shall they not be thought worthy of honour, and receive lasting marks of the public esteem and gratitude, and be allowed to transmit these to their posterity, for the encouragement of like virtue in others?—This subject might be pursued to a great length; and if we were to carry our reflections beyond what relates to the support and peace of human society, and extend them to the improvements of which it is capable, a wide field would be discovered for distinctions amongst men, according to the degrees

S E R M.
XI.

degrees of sound knowledge, and useful art in which they excel. Such improvements are manifestly of great advantage to human society. They raise it out of a state of ignorance, superstition, and barbarity. By them the understanding is enlightened, the affections of the heart properly directed, and the temper softened and humanized; and those persons who are the authors and promoters of such improvements, are to be regarded as considerable benefactors to mankind, deserving their highest esteem, and every mark of honour and respect.—But we proceed,

II. By comparing the advantages and disadvantages of these different conditions, to shew, That for the purpose of obtaining the true happiness of men, they are nearly on a level.

Persons possessed of wealth, outward honours, power and splendour, are by the multitude commonly deemed happy. Were this opinion founded in truth, the comparison

now

now to be stated would be idle and vain. But this is far from being the case, and no man can be persuaded of its being true, who gives himself time to reflect seriously on the subject. The highest claim of such things is to possess the means of happiness when properly used and improved; and in this view they ought always to be considered.

S E R M.

XI.

It was formerly observed, that the happiness of mankind must consist in the proper exertion of their rational faculties, and the right exercise and direction of their affections. In this view, every rank and condition of life will be found of such a nature, as to afford opportunity for these; and consequently men may be happy in all of them. We shall at present, however, consider the subject in a light somewhat different, but not opposite.

Sound health, freedom from disquieting passions, gratification of just desires, and mutual kindness, joined to the practice of piety and virtue, may be considered as making up the sum of human happiness in this world.

Let

S E R M.

XI

Let us see then how the different ranks and conditions of life affect these important circumstances.

1. With respect to health; the necessity of it in order to real enjoyment will be readily allowed. A person indeed of a virtuous and upright mind, even in sickness, cannot be deemed miserable; yet it must be acknowledged, that while we are in this world, health is requisite both for action and for enjoyment; and the known means of preserving health, and cheerfulness its companion, are temperance and exercise. When therefore we enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of different conditions, with respect to the preservation of health, it is the same as enquiring into the tendency they have to promote and encourage temperance and exercise, which no doubt may be used by men in all different situations. But the labouring part of mankind, of whom the class of men who are denominated *poor* in the text chiefly consists, find both these and their good effects in
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the necessities of their condition. Individuals among them may certainly be found slothful and intemperate; but, in general, indolence and intemperance must be excluded from their state. Sensible of the necessity of exercise, the rich use it as well as the poor; but as they are not induced to it from any urgent or uniform cause, it must be, and often is, in their case, desultory, and occasional, the effect of reflection and strong effort. The exercise of the rich, it may here be observed, is called peculiarly by that name; and that of the poor is called labour, as if a difference in name could make any difference in the nature of the thing, which is evidently the same in both. As therefore the exercise of the poor is more regular and uniform than that of the rich, its influence in preserving health must be more uniform likewise; and as their labour is constant, it affords little leisure for intemperance. Exceptions to this are frequently to be found; but I speak of what generally does, and must take place in the natural

S E R M

XI

natural course of things. On the other hand, affluence presents many temptations to indulgence of every kind, unfavourable and pernicious to health. Perhaps it may afford better opportunities of restoring health, after it has been impaired; but for the preservation and continuance of health, it seems to possess no superior advantage. The truth is, that both rich and poor may enjoy this blessing. With the poor it is almost a thing of course; but with the rich it is liable to become an object of too anxious attention, which disturbs their enjoyment of that degree of it which they possess. Particularly sweet is the rest of the labouring man, who is a stranger to anxiety; and with the return of day, he, with renewed vigour, and with a cheerful and undisturbed spirit, which is the best of all medicine, returns to his accustomed labour. From these considerations then, it may be justly concluded, that the situation of *rich* and *poor* is nearly on a level with respect to the securing of the blessing of health.

2. Freedom

2. Freedom from disquieting passions and gratification of just desires are essentially requisite to happiness.—It is the part of sound wisdom to entertain only such desires and passions as we can gratify with propriety. Virtue indeed may be said to consist in the right management of our desires and passions; and the condition of the poor cannot fairly be judged more unfavourable to this right management, than that of the rich. They appear to be less liable to the vexation which attends disappointment; their desires are fewer, more simple and more easily gratified. Common sense prevents mens harbouring desires which they see no probability of gratifying; and though thereby deprived of what are deemed great conveniencies in life, yet, as they have no violent desire for them, they are not unhappy by the want of them. Rich men cannot, by their own feelings, judge aright of those of their poorer brethren. Being accustomed to enjoy many conveniencies, and their desire of such conveniencies being con-

S E R M.

XL

S E R M.
XI.

firmed by habit, if these should be taken from them, and their usual gratifications thus be disappointed, they are sensible they would be very unhappy; but it would be a manifest error to conclude, that their poorer brethren, who never possessed the means of procuring these conveniencies, were as unhappy without them as they are. Desires increase with the means of gratification; and the more in number, and the keener they are, they expose men to the more frequent disappointment. If disappointment, and impatience its attendant, are sources of misery, the rich must unquestionably be deemed even more exposed to these than the poor; and their want of some of the conveniencies of life, to furnish which is, excepting the opportunity of doing good offices, the chief merit of riches;—this want, I say, seems abundantly compensated to the poor, by their not being sensible of the absence of any such conveniencies, and by the easy gratification of their more simple desires. The constant exercise which

which the condition of the poor requires, of itself affords ample satisfaction, and checks the growth of many troublesome desires and passions. Amongst other passions, ambition, which so completely overturns the peace of a man's own mind, and that of others around him, is not surely more apt to seize the poor than the rich. Men who have little time to spare from attending to their own affairs, will not readily be seduced by ambition, to disturb the concerns of others, and disquiet their own minds. It is true, indeed, that the situation of the poor affords many temptations to envy, the most tormenting of all the passions. But, upon reflection, we shall be convinced that the rich also are subject to its influence. One rich man is apt to envy another, who is more opulent than himself. Besides, it deserves to be considered, that this passion very frequently prevails among persons who are of the same rank, and possessed of similar advantages, rivals of one another, striving for the same object of power, fame, profit or pleasure.

S. E. R. M.
XI.

All conditions of life produce temptations to envy, but to these temptations the rich are exposed as well as the poor. With respect then to freedom from disquieting passions, and the gratification of our just desires, the condition of the poor is at least equal to that of the rich.

3. Mutual kindness is a circumstance essentially necessary to the happiness of men; and little self-enjoyment can that man have, whose heart is a stranger to sentiments of brotherly love. Mutual kindness naturally produces mutual good offices; and every condition of life, low as well as high, affords opportunity for the exercise of them. It may be thought, that an elevated and affluent condition has great advantages in this respect; and no doubt men in such stations possess more abundant means of performing such good offices as tend to relieve the necessities and forward the honest endeavours of their fellow creatures. They have a wider field, and a greater variety

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of occasions for exercising their beneficence, than the poor, which they ought to consider as the chief prerogative of their condition; but it does not follow from thence, that their kind affections, their confidence in those of other men, and their happiness which depends on these, are by this means much improved. A man possessed of power and wealth is apt to be much courted, flattered and praised; by which means he insensibly becomes the principal object in his own eyes. The praise to which he is accustomed, may become an object of greater value to him than the truth of his benevolence, of which the outward appearance may satisfy him, while the kindness of his heart is impaired,—to his great confusion and distress, when reflection discovers the state of his mind, and excites painful doubts and suspicions of the virtue which he fondly thought himself possessed of. Thus he may find cause to despise and be ashamed of himself, and at the same time discover that the apparent regard and attachment

S E R M.
XI

which other men shew to him, are mere pretence,—an appearance assumed for their own private ends. Such false expressions of regard for men possessed of wealth and power, are so common, that men of reflection are not disposed to put confidence in them. Thus power and wealth cannot secure to men these two principal sources of enjoyment, well grounded self esteem, and real esteem from other men. The condition of the rich exposes them to great deception in both these respects ; which deception, when discovered, or strongly suspected, must considerably diminish, or entirely put an end to their satisfaction. It was observed, that the sphere of action for the poor is more narrow than that of the rich, and the good offices they can perform are much less showy ; a thousand circumstances, however, occur, in which they can assist, relieve and comfort one another, and without the like hazard of deception, ascertain to themselves and others the truth of their mutual affection ; which is the essential requisite for their

their common happiness. Acts of kindness are not to be measured by the advantages which they confer, but by the strength of the affection from which they proceed. Thus our Lord judges in the case of the poor widow, who, at a general contribution for public purposes, paid in her *two mites**, a coin of the lowest value, neither urged by vanity, which her situation could not suggest, nor restrained by false shame from exposing her poverty.

S. E. R. M.

XI.

As mutual good offices are the chief support of mutual kindness, so selfish conduct arising from separate and opposite interest, is its destruction. Considered in this light, it surely cannot with justice be alleged, that the state of the poor gives greater encouragement to opposition of interest than that of the rich, and is therefore more unfriendly to kind affection. The rich have many different objects of pursuit, many rivals and competitors for the same objects, consequently frequent

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* Luke xxi. 2.

S E R M.

XI

opposition of interest, the common cause of disunion among men. The condition of the low and poor, therefore, is not more unfriendly to kind affection than that of the high and wealthy.

4. The practice of piety and virtue is indispensably requisite for securing that degree of happiness which is attainable in this world. Piety consists in right affections to God; in love, gratitude and submission to Him. Virtue is founded upon right affections to men, joined with a fixed determination to do what is right in all cases. This right mind towards God and man communicates the highest enjoyment of which men are capable. With respect to piety, all conditions afford strong reasons and incitements to the exercise of it. The conveniencies, and what are called the ornaments of human life, are not the chief grounds of love to God; but the principal ground of it is the provision God has made for the supply of what is necessary, the capacity of thought, judgement, and rational action,

action, the capacity of knowing and loving God, of good affections towards men, of distinguishing betwixt right and wrong, good and evil, the assurance of the Divine mercy to men, and the hope of heaven. These most important things are the just foundation of pious affections, and within the reach of all conditions. If our regard for God is owing only or chiefly to our possession of power or wealth, or things of that nature, our piety stands on a frail foundation, liable to change with every change of these very variable and uncertain circumstances. As all conditions afford opportunities for the exercise of piety, so do they for the exercise of virtue; which assumes the several names of justice, equity, temperance, and others, according to the nature of the actions which it has to perform: And if the general principle is what we aim to confirm, no station can prevent us. Every rank furnishes opportunities of *doing to others as we would they should do to us*. Wherever there is any intercourse with our fellow

S E R M.
XI.

fellow creatures, there is room for the exercise of justice, honesty, candour, and other virtues; and the true light in which we ought to view the different conditions of life is, that they afford opportunity for different exertions of the virtuous principle. The justice of a private man, for instance, is expressed by actions of a kind distinguished from those of a judge; the generosity of a man in narrow and of another in opulent circumstances, cannot be discovered or exerted in the same way; at the same time, the justice and generosity of both may be equally true and genuine. The different conditions of life strongly incite men to virtuous conduct, as no doubt they suggest temptations to the contrary. It is difficult to judge which of the opposite conditions of life is most conducive to the virtue and happiness of men. It is a full vindication of the providence of God, that men may obtain both in every condition.

III. FROM the several considerations then which have been suggested, it appears that the

the different conditions into which the Almighty has distributed men, are not by an arbitrary or partial arrangement; but the result of wisdom and goodness, prompted by which, *He maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth down, and lifteth up.* By the difference of their conditions, men are led to cultivate different virtues, and exert different talents, of which the whole society reap the advantage. They become sensible that they stand mutually in need of one another, and are mutually useful to each other. Hence they acquire higher value and importance in one another's eyes, and are united in a closer bond of mutual affection and attachment. This is evidently the natural tendency of the appointment of different conditions among men. It is true that men do frequently counteract this tendency, and abuse the appointment of God, to the increase of their own depravity: And what circumstance is there which men do not pervert to their own hurt? But if we will accustom ourselves to consider deliberately the just

S E R M.

XL

just and natural effect of the different conditions of men, we shall be enabled to discern the wisdom of the appointment; and leaving it to God to dispose of us here as he sees meet, be inclined to apply our chief care to the cultivation of the virtues which our situation peculiarly calls for. So shall we cease to complain of the conduct of Providence, and learn, to our happy experience, that the Lord of all the earth has done right *in making poor, and making rich; in bringing low, and lifting up.*

S E R M.

XL

S E R.

S E R M O N XII.

ON TRUST IN GOD.

ISAIAH XXvi. 3.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee.

PEACE of mind is here declared to be the portion of that man who trusteth in God; —of that man who is thankful for all past expressions of the Divine goodness, and has entire confidence in the continuance of that goodness for the future. Peace of mind is that essential quality, without which we cannot enjoy real and lasting satisfaction. A
mind

S E R M.
XII.

S E R M.
XII.

mind troubled by excessive sorrow and dejection, by fretfulness and repining, or by resentment and angry passions, is in a situation truly miserable. Let fortune smile, let wealth flow in abundance; collect all that can please the fancy, or gratify the senses, and bestow them on one whose mind is disturbed, all will be in vain! He is quite disqualified for enjoying what gives pleasure to a mind well disposed, and at ease; He nauseates what is offered to him; and, in this situation, should misfortune and distress attack him, their weight must fall double on his already wounded heart, ill fitted to repel or sustain them. If the spirit of a man is sound and easy, he will be able to bear such burdens; in the language of scripture, he will *sustain his infirmity**; but if the spirit itself fails, and is disquieted, the man must be wholly overwhelmed. Confidence in God, submission to his will, a determined acquiescence in his disposal of all things, will prove the most effectual means of establishing

* Prov. xviii. 14.

the soul in peace and tranquillity. God will S E R M.
XII.
keep in perfect peace the man whose mind is thus stayed on Him.

IN discoursing from these words, it is proposed to shew the influence of trust in God, and submission to his will, in promoting peace and tranquillity of soul : And this will appear by considering their tendency, *first*, To prevent and remove excessive sorrow and dejection ; *secondly*, To prevent or remove fretfulness and repining ; and, *thirdly*, To restrain resentment, and angry passions ;—three fruitful sources of disquiet to the minds of men.

I. TRUST in God, and submission to his will, tend to prevent or remove excessive sorrow and dejection.

This effect they produce, by habitually directing our thoughts to God, who disposes of all things with wisdom, and a paternal concern for his creatures ; while the want of this habit, leaves men the prey of grief and sorrow.

S E R M.
XII

row. When the spirit of a man is cast down, all his enjoyments lose their relish. That gloom which possesses his soul, strips them of all their charms : And as no accession of enjoyment revives him, so every new affliction sinks him the deeper in dejection. He increases his sorrow, by brooding over his misfortunes, by recollecting and exaggerating the advantages of any thing he has lost, and by enumerating and aggravating the circumstances of his present distress. This distress he does not see as it really is. His sorrow casts a mist before his eyes, which gives to his sufferings a monstrous and hideous appearance. This false view of them, is ready to overwhelm him with despair, to make him forget he lives in a well ordered world, and to attribute all to chance. He loses sight of the Supreme Ruler. Hence proceeds wasting melancholy,—melancholy, without any effectual remedy, except the slow operation of time. Or, if his sorrow does not carry him so far as to ascribe every event to chance, he will,

S E R M.
XII.

will, like the Psalmist, in a similar dejected mood, be ready to complain: *The Lord hath cast off for ever, He will be favourable no more, his mercy is clean gone, and his promise shall fail for evermore; He hath forgotten to be gracious, and in anger shut up his tender mercies*.*.

By such distrust and suspicion, he lends a helping hand to his calamities, to sink him the deeper in woe. But had he before hand considered the instability of all human things, had he fortified his mind by the habit of setting God ever before him, and upon such good reasons as that habit would have suggested, resolved to bear all misfortunes as became a man, no mournful event would have had such fatal effect upon him.

Of all persons, the man most liable to excessive sorrow and depression of soul, is he who lives in high and easy fortune, who, without thought, runs round the circle of vain pleasures, one amusement following hard after another; who has not seriously reflected

VOL. I.

U

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* Psal. lxxvii. 7.

S E R M.
XII.

on his own nature, on the end and purpose of his being, on the nature of society, of which he is a member, what office belongs to him in it, what relation he bears to others, and to the Supreme Head of all. This thoughtless person, when overtaken by calamity, and plunged into unexpected distress, especially if he is on a sudden thrown down from the towering height where he mistook himself, and forgot his Maker,—this person is, above all others, the surest prey to grief and dejection. As he was highly elated, he will be as deeply depressed, and bend sore under the weight of calamity; and he will fall with the greater force, and to the greater depth, in proportion to the height from whence he is thrown. The more sudden his calamity is, the more will he be confounded; and through want of presence or strength of mind, being unable to resist the first onset, he will be hurried into a gulf of sorrow. He has neither time, nor skill, nor power to recover himself; but, like one thrown

thrown from a precipice, stops not till he arrives at the bottom.

S E R M.
XII

On the other hand, the man who trusts in God, who has his soul replenished with those good maxims which lead to ready acquiescence in the Divine will, can never know so terrible a downfall; because the same maxims prevent his rising to that giddy and dangerous height, from whence the first storm may overset him. He trusts in God, and from Him derives courage and strength of mind. All his afflictions are converted into means of confirming his soul,—of confirming his confidence in God, and his determination to submit to Him in all things. As a man, indeed, he must be affected by losses or sharp afflictions; but not so deeply as to overpower his mind, and incapacitate him for any proper occupation or enjoyment. In all such cases, it would be the language of his heart, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: Blessed be the name of the Lord. Shall I receive good at the hand of God, and shall I not*

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receive

S E R M.
XII.

*receive evil * ?* Trust in God, disposes a man under affliction thus to reflect :—" This distress has not come upon me by chance. My heavenly Father has appointed it; and whatever his purpose in it may be, I am certain it must be a good one. It could not be to torment me, out of wantonness or cruelty; this it is impossible to conceive of Him. Some good end must be proposed by it. Some ill-passion in me is to be cured; some ill-placed attachment to be withdrawn; some levity or folly to be corrected; some grace and virtue to be confirmed in my heart; or some danger of greater evil to be prevented. Whatever the Divine purpose is, it must be good. Why then should I mourn, as one forlorn and desperate? *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; He will strengthen and relieve thee. Shall I despise the chastening of the Lord? or faint, when I am rebuked of him? seeing,*

* Job. i. 21. ii. 10.

*"seeing, whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth,
" even as a father the son in whom he delight-
" eth."*—Such are the thoughts and reflec-

S E R M.

XII.

tions which confirm the peace of the soul ; and no man can enjoy it, but he who has these thoughts fixed in his mind ; and in proportion to the impression they make upon him, will they support and encourage him in the hour of darkness and distress. But the man who is totally void of them, has little force to resist, repel, or sustain any great calamity with firmness. True, indeed, there is a native force in the mind of man, kindly bestowed by our heavenly Father, which naturally rises up, and would, in a good measure, sustain it, did not men willingly and timidly suffer it to sink down. Of itself, however, it is defective. But when a man sets himself to support it, by confidence in the goodness of God, and with a determined resignation to the Divine will, he then rises out of every affliction, and above every pressure more strong and bright ; knowing that the Almighty is

S E R M.
XII.

good to all, and in a particular manner makes all things work together, for good to them who trust in him. Therefore, though troubled on every side, he is not distressed in mind; though perplexed, he is not in despair; though persecuted, yet not forsaken; though in some degree cast down, yet not destroyed. He habitually raises his thoughts to God, pours out all his sorrows, displays all his wants before Him, and freely unbosoms himself, as to his most faithful friend. By this exercise, he improves his confidence in God, who blesses him with peace of mind, who supports him under affliction, and relieves him when it is most convenient. He rejoices in the knowledge, that God is nigh to all that call upon Him in truth, to fulfil their just desires, to hear their cry, and to save them. He knows that if he be not anxiously solicitous about his outward condition, but in every thing by prayer, with thanksgiving, express his requests to God, the Divine peace that passeth understanding,

understanding, shall keep his heart and mind, through Jesus Christ.

Give entertainment then to such thoughts as these. Accustom yourselves habitually to regard God as the Disposer of every event, and to acquiesce, with entire confidence, in his appointments; and thus be persuaded, with the Apostle, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers of any kind, nor things present, nor things to come,—shall be able to separate you from the love of God* *, and from true happiness, if you fix your trust on Him; for God will *keep all in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on Him.*

II. We have to shew the influence of trust in God, and determined submission to his will, in preventing or removing fretfulness and repining,—a most fruitful source of disquiet.

As soon may we stop the sun in his progress, as change the decrees of heaven. These

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* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

S E R M.
XII

hold a constant and invariable course, and carry us forcibly along with them. Follow them we must; but fretfulness makes us follow them with reluctance and unwillingness; which is to have our inclinations ever crossed, and to find no rest to our souls. To fight with distress, is miserable; by so doing, we add to our pain, and sting ourselves more severely. By fretting, we rub, inflame, and exasperate the sore, and thereby render it more tormenting, and more difficult to cure. While present pain oppresses, by fretfulness we aggravate,—we double it; we join 'the additional pain of impatience and discontent, to the outward affliction, and render ourselves extremely wretched. In this unhappy state of mind, we can find no delight in the contemplation of the Divine goodness, from which a patient mind derives the greatest satisfaction. My brethren, by repining at the conduct of Providence, we charge God with injustice, we discover an inclination to wrest the government out of his hands; we state ourselves as his judges,

judges, and accuse Him of wrong administration; and consequently deprive ourselves of all the comfort which the contemplation of the Divine Nature can afford. While we are conscious that our hearts are rebellious against God, by fretting and spurning at his conduct, what satisfaction can we obtain by lifting our thoughts to Him? We separate ourselves from his family, by refusing to submit to the order He has established there. We are as members lopped off, without any of that vital influence which is communicated from the head to the rest of the body. We shut out all the strong consolation which might thence arise, and we entirely destroy our own peace.

Even when outward pain is removed, a fretful mind is not at ease. It has contracted a habit of peevishness, which makes it spurn at every comfort. There is nothing so salutary, which a fretful mind cannot, and does not convert into poison. Our Maker formed us for sharing in the joy and welfare of our neighbour, but the mind of the man who repines, overturns

S E R M.

XII.

overturns this constitution, as to himself. It is not enough that he himself is unhappy, he would have others to be so too. Envy corrodes his soul. The prosperity or success of his neighbour, is torture to him; the sight of a cheerful countenance offends him.—In short, he at last grows angry with God Himself, and with every thing around him. A friend who endeavours to divert him, is driven off with a testy refusal. Tell him that he vexes himself to no purpose; he answers, he has reason to be angry;—he cannot help it; he must fret and be angry still.—Such are the torments of a repining and peevish disposition!

But determined submission to the will of God, and trust in his goodness, prevent or remove this disorder, and keep the mind in peace. They dispose us not to trouble ourselves with painful complaints of our condition, and vain wishes that it were altered. Before afflictions come upon us, trust in God prepares us for them, and thereby breaks their force. During their continuance, it alleviates them,

them, by keeping the mind intent on higher things. In the intervals of distress, it enables a man to enjoy himself fully, and to taste the satisfactions and comforts of life, with the truest relish. It engages him to search through his condition, for every circumstance that ought to give him joy, and thankfully to improve it to his advantage.

S. E. R. M.

XII.

Every state is chequered with good and ill: As there is none altogether without trouble, so there is none absolutely miserable,—none from which a wise man cannot extract real comfort to his soul. A man in poverty may enjoy health and strength, and liberty; and it is his own fault if he wants a peaceful mind. A man deprived of health, may, except in extreme pain, which is seldom lasting, enjoy the conversation of his friends, and find leisure to reflect on his conduct, correct his mistakes, improve his understanding and heart, and make himself both a wiser and a better man; which is a noble employment, and productive of the most solid satisfaction. There

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S E R M.
XII

is no state, then, without its advantages ; but all these are overlooked by the fretful and impatient. It is the man who trusts in God, and resolves to acquiesce in his will, and he alone who can discern whatever can lighten or divert his trouble, and guard against aggravating his distress by his own impatience and peevish complaints. His mind is so employed, that he has no time to waste in fruitless complaining. He is open to every becoming enjoyment in life. He draws some satisfaction from every occurrence, *and possesses his soul in peace*, whatever shall befall him. Pleasure affects his righteous mind with accumulated, and pain with diminished, force. He possesses a disposition which is fitted to reap joy from all the creatures of God. With great delight, he contemplates the beautiful face of nature, all rich with the Divine bounty ; and he claims a relation to the whole. By sympathy, he shares in the joy universally diffused by the Almighty. He feels, with exquisite sensibility, the influence of virtuous friendship. He suffers
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not his own troubles to engross his concern, but interests himself in a brother's prosperity, and alleviates the pain of his own adverse circumstances, by heartily taking part in his neighbour's joy, and making it his own. Thus he possesses within himself many sources of enjoyment, and acquires a firmness and composure of mind, not easily ruffled by misfortune. The satisfaction arising from conscious rectitude of heart, and from well-grounded confidence in the goodness of the All-wise Ruler of the world, suppresses every rising murmur against the providence of God, and preserves the mind calm and serene, amidst the changes to which every human condition is liable.— But this is not all: For—

III. Trust in God, and determined submission to his will in all things, tend to restrain that resentment, and those angry passions, from whence much of human misery is derived.

When

S. E. R. M.
XII.

When a man is injured by his neighbour, it is not so much the loss he sustains, or the harm he receives, that distresses him, as the injustice of his neighbour's conduct. It is his own resentment against this injustice that chiefly torments him, and urges him to revenge. While this passion possesses him, he knows no rest. Impatient to make the injurious person suffer in his turn, he knows no ease till he can execute his vengeful purpose; and as this cannot always be done with safety to himself, his passion preys upon his own mind, and banishes his peace. Pride too, joins his resentment in tormenting him. As the offender appears in the light of obtaining advantage over him, he longs to shew himself equal or superior to him by retaliating the injury. Above all, injustice or neglect from friends gives a man the sharpest pain. Conscious of affection to them, and trusting to their reciprocal regard, he is greatly disappointed and tortured when any part of their conduct discovers the reverse. Men can ill bear

bear neglect from their friends. When these appear to forget or disregard them, their hearts are distracted by various passions. Repentment, sorrow and vexation lay hold on them. As a man knows that his friends are well acquainted with him, their neglect conveys the idea that he is contemptible in their eyes; a reflection which affects him with the sharpest pain. He suffers it in a less degree, when his friends are guilty of open violence or treachery; though such treatment from them is more shocking and intolerable than from others, with whom he has had no friendly connection. "It was not an enemy," says a man thus abused, "that reproached me, otherwise I could have borne it with patience. It was not an enemy that magnified himself against me, otherwise I would have avoided him with unconcern; but it was a man who was mine equal, my acquaintance and my friend. We took sweet counsel together, our thoughts and concerns were common, and I little dreaded or suspected

S E R M.

XII

“spected such treatment from him; but
“since this is the case, I will requite him
“according to his behaviour to me.”

What then, my brethren, will most effectually quell these storms of passion in the human breast? what will keep it in peace in all events? what will suppress and restrain those angry affections which raise such tumults in the heart? On due deliberation, it will be found, that nothing can produce this happy effect, but trust in God, and a determined acquiescence in his will, founded on a full persuasion that his wisdom and goodness are uniformly exercised in the government of the world. This determined acquiescence in the Divine will, disposes us to forget the evil conduct of our fellow-creatures, and to look beyond them to God the first Cause of all, who ordains these trials, as the occasions of exercising and confirming in us the virtues of meekness and forbearance, of patience, fortitude and strength of mind. Let any man treat you with injustice, with violence, with
scorn

scorn or neglect, still it is in your power to disregard the utmost efforts of his pride and malice, and preserve the calmness of your soul. God hath made your happiness to depend on yourselves,—on the state of your own mind; and nothing can prevent or interrupt it, if you are true to yourselves. By habitual acquiescence in the will of God, we retain our tranquillity, and recollect the proper reasons for meekness and patience. If treacherously abandoned by a friend, our first feeling, when the mind is properly disposed, is pity; and the next is self-congratulation, on being undeceived concerning one so unworthy of our affection and confidence. If unkindly or unjustly used by others, the ready reflection of our mind is, “Shall I indulge
“resentment and rage against those whom
“God endures? Our heavenly Father bears
“with them; and let us follow his Divine
“example.” The same habit of acquiescence disposes and enables a man to make every reasonable allowance for the mistakes,

S E R M.
XII.

the ignorance, the engagements and particular temper of those who neglect or injure him. Many seeming offences, which we are apt to ascribe to deliberate malice, will, upon enquiry, be found to proceed from rashness, heedlessness or indiscretion, and by no means from mischievous design. Such are often the causes of actions which men are apt to attribute to want of affection, or to deliberate malice. By making such allowances as these, injuries are lessened, and consequently resentment suppressed and restrained; free scope is given to the exercise of piety and good will, which diffuse gladness and satisfaction over the heart. As a man in distress feels himself somewhat relieved and comforted by the presence of his friends around him, so those friendly maxims which trust in God suggests and keeps alive in the mind, prevent or restrain resentment, render injuries less grievous, and sometimes hardly to be felt; and preserve the peace of our mind entire.

UPON

UPON the whole, from what has been said on this subject it appears, that trust in God and determined acquiescence in his will, have a direct and happy influence in promoting the peace and tranquillity of our souls; by preventing or removing excessive sorrow and dejection, by preventing or removing fretfulness and repining, and by restraining resentment and angry passions, the chief sources of disquiet to the minds of men. Trust in God elevates the soul to a height, where it cannot be shaken by the revolutions and calamities of this lower world. It continually suggests to the mind, that its happiness is secure in the hands of an Almighty Friend. The man who trusts in God, knows that though a load of afflictions should fall upon him, the utmost effect they can have, is to crush and destroy his body; but they cannot reach the soul, whose happiness is independent on external things. And though the reason of each Divine dispensation do not lie open to his view, he rests assured, that all of them are proper

S E R M.
XII.

means of conducting him to his chief good. If therefore he is disappointed in any temporal pursuit, he is little troubled; for his chief interest is still secure. If friends prove deceitful, he has a Supreme Friend, in whom he can ever confide. If death bereaves him of friends, who have continued true to the end of life, he has an Almighty Friend, who lives for ever, whose kindness is invariable, whose faithfulness is eternal, who is ever present to protect, to encourage and to save him; and who can no more forsake the righteous, than lose his own nature, or cease to exist.

S E R M.
XII.S E R M.
XII.

S E R M O N XIII.

ON THE SOURCES OF DELIGHT IN PUBLIC
DEVOTION.

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the
LORD'S SUPPER.]

PSALM lxxxiv. 1.

*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of
Hosts?*

THE soul of man is of a spiritual nature.

It was not formed merely to hear and
see and perceive, by the external senses, the
various objects which surround it, which are
the numerous works of God ; but to trace out

S E R M.

XIII

their connection, good order and mutual dependence, and the source from whence they all spring; for in the progress of its investigations and discoveries, it cannot rest satisfied till it reach the first Cause of all. It is not only true that *just men live by faith, and not by sense*; but it is also true, that the minds of all men were formed for the same purpose; and that they cannot live, that is, cannot enjoy life and happiness, in the exercise of sense alone, but in the faith of one great first Cause, the Father of the world, who planned, arranged and rules it according to the most perfect wisdom and goodness: And the discovery of this great Origin of all things, readily excites the highest admiration and reverence, love and gratitude towards Him. So true it is that man is by his nature formed for the exercise of religious affections. Accordingly, there is scarce any people on earth, however barbarous and uncultivated, who have not some notion of a deity whom they reverence in private, and to whom, in public assembly, they pay

pay the united tribute of praise and adoration. As men are formed for union and society in all things, it is also natural for them to join in public adoration and praise of the Supreme Being.

These sentiments and tendencies of the human soul are the foundation of divine worship, and of that pleasure and delight which are found in it by all good men. It is pleasant to admire wisdom, and to praise goodness in every degree; it is more so to admire and praise these perfections as belonging to God, who possesses them completely; and it is pleasantest of all, to praise Him in assemblies of the righteous. There, each person is animated by his neighbour, and, by a mutual sympathy, they are kindled into a warmer flame of devotion. There, the force of brotherly love, joined to the love of God, communicates to each mind the purest satisfaction and delight. Hence arise the longings of good men for the *tabernacles of the Lord*; that is, for the assemblies of the pious and devout.

S. E. R. M.
XIII.

Experience of this made the Psalmist joyfully declare, *Blessed are they whom thou chooshest, and causest to approach unto Thee: they shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple* *. *My God, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and parched land, that I may see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary* †. The experience of delight found in the public exercises of devotion, produced the exclamation in the text, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*

THESE words naturally lead to the consideration of the excellence of public devotion, and of the delight which good men find in it; but at present we shall confine ourselves to the last of these chiefly, and endeavour to point out some of the sources from whence that delight flows. This subject, if considered with attention, is well calculated to communicate both light and joy to the mind:

* Psal. lxxv. 4.

† Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2.

mind! And may God enable us so to speak and hear, that we may all find to our happy experience, this day, that the tabernacles of the Lord are both amiable and delightful!

I AM then to point out some of the sources of that delight which good men find in the public exercise of devotion.

I. THIS delight flows from the admiration of the Divine wisdom and goodness, which possesses the devout soul.

The human soul was formed for the contemplation of the Divine perfections, power, wisdom and goodness. When any thing great or good is clearly presented to it, it dwells with admiration and pleasure on such an object. Such being its nature, the perfections of God must give it the highest elevation, and afford it the purest delight; and it may well surprise a thinking person, that any one should be found of so gross a spirit as never
to

S E R M.
XIII.

to lift up his soul to the source of light and life, but to be a stranger to that pleasure which the contemplation of the Divine perfection communicates. Can any one survey, even but slightly, this crowded world, all rich with the bounty of God, without adoring that goodness which is so widely diffused? But above all, what heart can, with coldness and unconcern, contemplate the most remarkable exertion of the Divine goodness in the Redemption of fallen men? Such, however, is the attachment of many to present objects, and so eager their pursuit of them, that the continued working of the Divine hand is not attended to, the wisdom and the mercy of God are overlooked and neglected, the interests and pleasures of this fleeting state engross their thoughts and care, and the necessity they lie under to give some share of their attention to these, becomes an occasion of giving it all to them, while they shamefully neglect their great Creator and Saviour, and are utterly ignorant of the pleasures of piety
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and devotion. In order to become acquainted with these, we must frequently withdraw our thoughts from the vanity, the bustle, and tumults of this life, and those grovelling cares which obscure and distract the mind; and direct our attention to the wonderful works and gracious ways of the Most High. Then shall the light of Divine wisdom reach our hearts; thus disposed, the righteous with joy go up to the house of the Lord, and set themselves to behold and consider those his works and ways. The clouds of darkness which involved their minds, are gradually dispelled, and the Divine goodness shines upon them more and more clear; they are particularly wrapt in admiration of *the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh* *; and transported with the view of *righteousness and peace met together* †, of mercy and truth happily united, and conspiring to deliver unhappy men from destruction, and to restore them to the original purity and happiness of their nature. If the
angels

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† Psal. lxxxv. 10.

S E R M.
XXII.

angels in heaven, creatures far more enlightened than men, find such delight in the contemplation of this great thing, as to be ever searching into it more deeply, how much more delighted with it should every ingenuous Christian be, to whom it is so deeply interesting? This is no fanciful pleasure, but a rational enjoyment to the soul of man; for wherein does our happiness consist, but in our spiritual powers being rightly exercised, and our best affections finding their proper objects? When any good affection finds its proper object, does it not rest upon it with complacency, and fill the heart with joy? Happy therefore is the man who admires and loves the Lord. But this happiness cannot be properly felt by those whose love to God is either weak or impure. Where the affection itself is feeble, the pleasure resulting from it must be so likewise. Men of selfish minds imagine, that the pleasure of love and good will to mankind is but small, because they themselves are strangers to genuine and pure love

love to their fellow-creatures. Nevertheless it is true, that love to God, and love to men, are affections fruitful of the greatest pleasure to the human soul. Thrice happy is that soul which, free from all polluted thoughts, can meditate with admiration and delight on the wonders of God's love! *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. He sent redemption unto his people. He hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name;* and respectful and delightful are that regard and affection which good men bear to Him at all times, and especially in his sanctuary.

The greatest and best work of God to men, and therefore the most admirable, is that of their redemption through Jesus Christ. Now, therefore, let us lay open our minds to the influence of that astonishing goodness; let us consider it with attention, and dwell upon it together, and we shall be no strangers to that high satisfaction with which it blesses the pious soul. Behold and admire the amazing plan

S E R M.
XIII.

plan of our redemption ! Wisdom, by itself, is most admirable ; goodness alone, is amiable and delightful ; but in this plan you behold the harmonious concurrence of wisdom and goodness, of truth and mercy, in promoting and perfecting the salvation of men.

II. THIS delight, which good men find in public devotion, flows from the affectionate praise of the Divine goodness, which the righteous celebrate in their worship.

By the tabernacles of the Lord, we are to understand assemblies of good men met together, to praise the Lord with one heart and one mind, strongly affected with gratitude for his goodness. All the works of God proclaim his wisdom and goodness, and shew forth his praise ; but unto man, in this lower world, it belongeth to praise Him with understanding. God hath set his eye on their hearts, to shew them the greatness of his works. He gives them to glory in his marvellous acts, that they may declare his works with understanding.

standing. One part of the heavenly happiness is asserted to consist in the joyful acclamations of praise which Angels and blessed Spirits pour forth to the Source of all happiness. Good, therefore, and pleasant it is for pure minds to sing praise to the Lord; such *praise* is both *comely* and delightful to *the upright*.

If it is a pleasant exercise to join together in relating the virtues of a true friend and generous benefactor, to recollect his numerous benefits and the unwearied exercise of his goodness, and to strive who shall be warmest in his praise,—how much more delightful must it be to call to our remembrance the loving kindness of the Lord, and celebrate the praise of his great goodness! If the mind is pleased with the rectitude of its own dispositions, when it gives due praise to a good and worthy man, must it not feel the strongest satisfaction, and self applause, when the heart is thus right with God? when it is discharging so proper an office of a rational creature, in celebrating

S E R M
XIII

celebrating the praise of its Creator and Redeemer? Doubly joyful must a multitude be when so properly employed. Then each heart rejoices in its own state and temper; and from the interest they all take in one another's welfare, doubly joyful are they when they all unite in affectionate praise of the God of their salvation. How happy must an assembly of sincere and affectionate Christians be, who are all occupied in reviewing the kindness of their Redeemer, and tracing it through all the steps of his life; and chiefly recollecting the firmness, readiness, and resolution with which he suffered the sharpest distress for their sakes! How must their hearts glow within them, at the remembrance of such a friend! how delightful their praise of Him! how delightful and affectionate also their mutual congratulations, on account of their common felicity! A good man, indeed, may enjoy like satisfaction in private. There, his heart may be warmed with the love of God, and send forth joyful praise to his Maker and Redeemer;

Redeemer; but in the assembly of the righteous, his heart is more strongly affected. All affections gather strength by communication; and the stronger the affection is, the higher delight it must afford. A good man, full of love to his heavenly Father, would have all men filled with the same affection; he would have others to enjoy the same pleasure with himself; he wishes not to eat his pleasing morsel alone, but longs that others should share with him; and when, in a congregation of the righteous, he sees his brethren around him all animated with the love of God, and, with one heart and one voice, joining in the praise of his Creator, his joy is full.

Farther: As it is in the tabernacles of the Lord, and by means of religious assemblies, that one generation transmits the praise of God to another, and shews forth the love of Christ till He come again, must it not give delight to true Christians, to reflect that they are of the number who transmit the praise of God to future generations? No wonder then

S E R M.
XIII.

that the godly find so great pleasure in the tabernacles of the Lord, that *their hearts long, —yea faint, for the courts of the living God.* No wonder that the Psalmist says so warmly, *Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O God! for they are still praising thee**. No wonder that he declares his resolution to praise God among the people, and in the congregation,—that he wishes, so earnestly, *that men would praise God for his goodness, for his wonderful works of mercy to the children of men†*; and that he calls upon all the saints of God to give thanks, at the remembrance of them. *Let all the people praise thee, O God! Let them give glory to the Lord from the ends of the earth, and declare his praise in the islands‡.* Let every creature in heaven, and upon earth, praise God: And now let us sing,—*Blessing and honour, and glory and thanksgiving, be unto our God, and to the Lamb that was slain, for ever, and for ever* ||.

III. THE

* Psal. lxxxiv. 4.

† Psal. cvii. 8.

‡ Isa. xlii. 12.

|| Rev. v. 13.

III. THE delight which good men take in public devotion, flows from trust and confidence in God, when they praise Him, pour forth their wants, and confess their sins before Him.

S E R M
XIII.

When the righteous praise God, his goodness is full before them; and goodness is the ground of confidence to the heart of man. *Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O God! for their strength is in thee**. How apt are even good men to be cast down, and disquieted within them, on account of the dangers and distresses of this mortal state? how apt is their trust in God to be staggered, and the peace of their minds to be disturbed? Even the Psalmist confesses, that in midst of trouble, his soul sometimes refused to be comforted, and gave way to peevish complaining, saying, in the perplexity of his heart, *Will the Lord cast me off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Hath He forgotten to be gracious? and in anger shut up his tender mercies†?* The

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* Psal. lxxxiv. 5.

† Psal. lxxvii. 7.—9.

S E R M.
XIII

like disquiet he felt, when he observed the prosperity of the wicked, which made him complain, that *he cleansed his heart in vain, and washed his hands in innocency* *, to no purpose. So discontented and unhappy was he, till he went into the sanctuary. There he understood *the end of the wicked*, and the end of all his trouble ; his mistakes were corrected, and his faith and confidence in God were re-established. It is in the sanctuary, during the exercise of devotion, when the soul sets itself to contemplate the Divine goodness, and beholds it conducting all things to a happy issue, that its confidence in the Almighty acquires new vigour, and the ills of life lose the power of disquieting it. There the oppression of the wicked, the injustice and reproaches of mistaken men, the scorn of fools, and the many troubles men are exposed to in this world, disappear, and are dispelled by the brightness of God's love, as light clouds before the sun. All the vexatious passions that disturb the heart

* Psal. lxxiii. 13.

heart of man, are silenced, and chastised by the Divine goodness; and the soul, calm and serene, reposes itself upon God, its strength and portion, for ever. How serene, especially, must the true Christian be, when his mind is wholly engrossed, by God's unspeakable love, in Christ Jesus! Before this astonishing proof of the Divine goodness, all doubts vanish, all fear and distrust fly away.

But not only are the ills of life apt to weaken our trust in God; the consciousness of guilt, is another and stronger cause of disquiet, arising from the doubt of obtaining pardon from Him. This is a ground of unhappiness which, without Christ, we could not remove. But when encouraged by his gracious mediation, and assurances of mercy from God, we meet together to celebrate the praise of that mercy, all our doubts and fears must vanish. What can disquiet those who know *that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit? Who can lay any thing to the charge*

S E R M.
XIII.

*of God's elect**? since God Himself acquits and justifies them, Who can condemn them; since Christ died and rose again, and ascended to heaven, for securing their happiness? It is in the tabernacles of the Lord, in the exercises of devotion, that this mercy of God shines bright on the penitent and pious soul, filling it with love and assured confidence. When the heart is well disposed towards God, all the sources of disquiet are shut up; and should any doubts or fears begin to intrude themselves into such a mind, it quickly checks them, and rebukes itself in the words of the Psalmist, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me*†? *Still hope in God*, and he will save thee. Assured of pardon, the devout Christian readily confesses his former sins; and knowing that he shall be heard in mercy, he lays open all his wants before his heavenly Father, to whom he entirely and joyfully commits himself. It is true, indeed, that the recollection and confession of sin, is attended

* Rom. viii. 1.—33.

† Psal. xlii. 5.

attended with shame and sorrow; but this sorrow, in the pious mind, is of a godly sort, and endeth in joy. That melting of the soul, that regret and concern for past ingratitude and disobedience to God, is not of a nature to produce misery; it is the resentment of an ingenuous heart against its own former baseness, and ever attended by a strong desire and firm resolution to renounce all such baseness for the future. And must not this just concern, and honest confession before God, this inward sincere promise of better behaviour, this entire devotion to the service of God, open a spring of pure and perpetual satisfaction to the soul, and afford complete relief from all its burdens?

IV. THE delight which good men feel in the exercise of public devotion, flows from their experience of farther communication of Divine grace, by means of these devout exercises.

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S E R M.
XIII

God has appointed the ordinances of religion to be the means of conveying his grace to his people; and they are not arbitrary, but just and natural, means of this conveyance, founded in the certain maxim, that repeated actions establish habits in the soul; and that delight felt in any exercise, leads the mind to renew the same exercise frequently. When the soul has been, as it often must be, in the exercise of devotion, thoroughly warmed with admiration of Divine goodness, when it has joyfully joined in the praise thereof, when it has heartily renounced the sins that formerly beset it, devoted itself to the service and imitation of that goodness, and felt real satisfaction in such exercises, it will return to them more readily, till at length they become familiar and habitual to it. But this admiration and praise of God, with the dispositions that accompany them, are excellent graces in themselves, and excite in the soul the most vigorous endeavours to render its whole conduct a beautiful and uniform song of praise to the

the Most High. Thus, in the way of just consequence, the exercises of public devotion, rightly performed, are a proper mean of nourishing and improving in us the graces of the Spirit. They are not to be considered as charms that operate in an unintelligible manner, but as rational exercises, improving rational principles, and influencing the heart by rational motives, and right views of God. And to such exercises, God has been pleased to join the promise of the aid of his Spirit, to render them more effectual. By them, our love to God, and our gratitude to Christ Jesus, are heightened; our brotherly affection becomes more pure, constant, and generous; and the promise of the assistance of God's Spirit, secures sufficient strength to the willing mind, to perform them aright. The actual experience of these good effects upon the mind, must render the tabernacles of the Lord amiable to the righteous. If it be delightful to advance in knowledge; if it be delightful to enjoy established friendship with
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S E R M
XIII

the good and righteous ; how much more so must it be to feel our souls gradually advancing in the likeness and favour of God, and our whole heart burning with zeal to serve Him?—Which leads me to observe,—

V. THAT the delight arising to good men from public devotion, flows from the sincere and ardent resolutions which they then form to serve God, and pay their vows to the Most High.

That admiration and love of God which dwell in his tabernacles, which animate the righteous in their devotion, are not silent or indolent affections, but of an active nature, and immediately break forth in fervent strains of praise. Nor do they stop there, but fire the soul with the warmest resolutions of cheerful and constant obedience. When we admire the goodness of God, when, with esteem and love, we praise Him, must we not farther earnestly desire to be like Him, to have some share of his excellence transferred to our soul, and

and to enjoy the approbation of that excellence which we esteem so highly? Resolutions of holy and righteous conduct, cannot be separated from love to God. When the heart is enlightened, to see into the wonders of God's nature and law, it will then desire and determine *to walk in the way of his commandments*. When the heart of a devout Christian ascends to his Saviour, in ardent love and praise, it must long for his likeness and favour, and form the sincerest vows to serve that Saviour, to whom it bears so strong an affection. In the tabernacles of the Lord, vows are made, resolutions formed, and the whole heart bent to do his will, and persevere in so doing to the end. The devout Christian, when he remembers his Saviour's love, touched with the deepest regret for his past forgetfulness of that love, for actions which testify ingratitude or neglect, roused by shame, and prompted by renewed affection to his Lord, devotes his whole soul to Him for the future; and, next to the pleasure that follows good actions already done,

S E R M.
XIII.

done, is that which attends resolutions to do good for the time to come. The soul exults in the prospect of deliverance from the tyranny of sin, and of the honour and happiness which will result from its future virtuous behaviour. If it be highly joyful for a man to be restored to long lost liberty, or to friends from whom he has been long separated; how much more so must it be for the Christian to find his soul vindicated from spiritual slavery, its liberty more and more confirmed, and to be restored to these true and eternal friends of the soul, piety, love, goodness, and the Divine Image? If to recover the esteem of our fellow creatures, after lying long under their just contempt and reproach, must fill a man with the most lively satisfaction; how much greater pleasure must it afford the real Christian, to find true honour come and take up its abode within him, and to enjoy the blessed prospect of favour and approbation from God?—So delightful is it to dwell in
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the tabernacles of the Lord, and to vow the most constant and ready obedience to Him?

S E R M.
XIII

Thus have we endeavoured to point out some of the sources of that delight which good men find within the tabernacles of the Lord, in the exercises of public devotion. An attentive mind will readily discern a necessary connection between these several sources of delight, all of them being right dispositions of mind, and holy affections properly exercised on the noblest objects; and where one of these affections is pure and vigorous, the rest become strong likewise. Let us then study to be so well disposed, that we may be no strangers to this sacred delight, and that we may long for the courts of the living God.

If this delight is to be found, in all exercises of serious devotion, it must surely in a particular manner possess our soul, when celebrating the praise of God's love manifested in

S. E. R. M.
XIII

in the Redemption of mankind. This presents to us the strongest ground of admiration, of praise, of trust in God, and the loudest call to holy and virtuous resolutions, all of which are the true springs of satisfaction and joy to the heart of man. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by an easy transition of thought from the bread broken, and the wine poured forth, the mind is directed to the spiritual object represented by them, to wit, the love of Christ Jesus to men, inducing Him to submit cheerfully to death for their sake: And gross is that heart which does not distinguish the one from the other. In this sacrament, as in a lively picture, we may behold the greatness of God's love to men, the sufferings of Christ which are therein represented, being the strongest seal and testimony thereof.

Let us then, on such occasions, withdraw our minds from all meaner things; let God and his goodness possess them wholly;
and

and animated by admiration, esteem and love,
let us, with sound and honest hearts, send
forth united praises to the God of our salva-
tion, and to *the Lamb that was slain, for ever
and ever !*

S E R M.
XIII.

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E. R. M.
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and animated by religious affection and love

let us with loud and honest hearts

loud praise to the God of our fathers

and to the Lord Jesus Christ

and to the Holy Spirit

and to the Father who is above all

and who is with us and who is in us

and who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

and who is the Father of all who believe in Him

and who is the Father of all who love Him

and who is the Father of all who are in Him

and who is the Father of all who are with Him

and who is the Father of all who are for Him

and who is the Father of all who are in Him

and who is the Father of all who are with Him

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S E R M O N XIV.

ON ASPIRING AFTER PERFECTION.

GENESIS xvii. 1.

—Walk before me, and be thou perfect.

THE noble and extensive powers of the human mind, shew that we are made for some considerable end; and that which is our end, must be our perfection and happiness. It highly concerns us all, therefore, to enquire for what purpose we were made, and what course of life we are to follow; for without fixing to ourselves the end we are to pursue, we must live at random, having no consistency of behaviour, and be driven about by

VOL. I.

Z

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S E R M
XIV

S E R M.
XIV.

every wind of passion, the sport of every fancy, unable to review with pleasure the path we have trod, and ignorant whither we shall next turn ourselves; not being our own masters, but the slaves of blind and rash inclinations. Let us therefore carefully attend to the voice of God, calling to us from within our own hearts, and teaching us in his holy Word, how we are to live, and what we are to aim at; till we come seriously, and after due examination, to resolve with the Psalmist, to behave ourselves *wisely in a perfect way*. Nothing less than perfection must be the object of our ambition and pursuit.

This perfection consists in the free, easy and natural exercise of all divine and social virtues, according to what a pure mind, aided by the grace of God, conceives it to be in the moral character of God Himself, and to prevail in the heavenly society, after which every good man aspires: And nothing less than the most sincere and ardent endeavours

to reach this state of excellence is necessary to prepare us for that society.

No state can be agreeable to us, unless our dispositions correspond to it. This world could not give us the least satisfaction, if we had not affections suited to our circumstances in it: And can we think to live happily in heaven, if our temper is not formed to its condition? If love be the commanding affection, and the only principle of action there, where shall the selfish, narrow, or malicious, find room? If reason prevail in all the members of that state, must not the slaves of passion be excluded? If the contemplation of truth and virtue be the highest delight, and the exercise thereof the sole employment, of the inhabitants of heaven, where shall the sensual or the covetous appear? The deaf and blind might as well pretend to hear and see, as any man can hope to be happy in heaven, without a heavenly disposition of soul. Our hearts must here be attuned to the harmony of those

S E R M.
XIV.

exalted regions. Now religion teaches, and our hearts confirm the doctrine, that the ordinary qualifications for heaven are, a temper by exercise formed to goodness, fixed dispositions to holiness, and virtuous habits confirmed by assiduous care and repeated practice. Repentance from dead works, and faith towards God being, through grace, once established in our minds,—this good foundation being once laid, then are we to build the noble superstructure of piety and virtue, daily advancing the work, and raising one virtuous action above another, diligent to bring the whole to perfection.

IN discoursing farther from the words of the text, I shall, *first*, Consider the provision which God has made for carrying us forward to perfection; and, *secondly*, Give some directions for our more successful progress towards that state.

I. LET

I. LET us consider the provision which God has made for carrying us forward to perfection.

S E R M.
XIV.

i. The ground-work of this improvement is laid in the constitution of our souls, which have a power of forming habits in any thing to which they apply themselves. Hence the saying, "That use or habit becomes a second nature." The dispositions that are acquired by repeated exercise, grow as constant and powerful, and as readily exert themselves, as those that are originally implanted within us. We find, by accustoming ourselves even to things, to which at first we had an aversion, that we contract such an inclination and bias toward them, as would cost labour and pains to overcome. Thus, amongst the various tastes and pursuits of mankind, each man has, by reiterated application, got a certain bent to his own course of life, so strong, that should any obstacle present itself to stop or divert its current, it would, like a rapid river, surmount all, and regain its former channel;

S E R M.
XIV.

and the farther it runs it becomes more rapid and irresistible. A vicious man, by long indulgence of his favourite passions, is at length so enslaved to them, that notwithstanding the frequent and sharp remonstrances of his own mind, and the fresh disappointments he meets with, he cannot extricate himself from his bondage, nor shake off the chains with which he is fettered. In the same manner the righteous man, by the uniform practice of virtue, gains so fixed an attachment to it, that death is far less the object of his aversion, than wickedness. There is this remarkable difference, however, betwixt the good and bad man; that the latter, in turning aside to vice, does violence to himself, and must often do so through the course of his life; whereas the good man, if from the beginning he has not deviated from virtue, but held on straight in its path, has never suffered any violence; but with pleasure, and the consenting approbation of his own mind, has followed the tendency of his nature. If, indeed, he has been so unhappy

happy as at any time to have indulged vicious dispositions, it will cost him pains to break them off; but the difficulty is great only in the beginning, daily grows less and less, and at last vanishes altogether. We first try the exercise of virtue, we then taste its pleasure, take a near view of its beauty, discern its superior excellency, and grow fond of it; and at last we cannot abstain from exercising it. By a constant attention to righteousness, and by adding one right action to another, the disposition to do good grows unconquerable, and the practice is made easy, uniform, and delightful. Thus has God laid the foundation of improvement in our nature, by giving us the power of forming habits of virtue, whereby we grow to perfection. To be perfect, is to possess invincible habits in every virtue; and the way to form habits of virtue, is to practise it. It is practice alone which gives a masterly hand in any thing. It is not theory, speculation, or revolving any art in our thoughts, that will make us ready and able

S E R M.
XIV

performers in it; nothing but long trial and exercise can produce this. The same holds true with respect to virtue, which may be justly called, the Art of life. Contemplation of its nature, surveying its beauty, even pleasure in beholding it, will not render us virtuous. To acquire this character, and to be able to perform aright the duties of life, we must unweariedly continue in the practice of righteousness. Virtue consists in action. Its real existence can be ascertained and secured by action only. By one kind beneficent action we receive high satisfaction of soul; this pleasure leads us to repeat what caused it; this repetition heightens the self-complacency, and strengthens our eagerness to be kind and useful; and so we contract the habit of doing good. In the same manner, by once overcoming any unreasonable or unnatural passion, we discover its real weakness and deceit, are made sensible of the power of the mind, and are highly pleased with the victory; and the consciousness of having act-
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ed a noble and worthy part, strengthens us against any after assaults. Thus, by one act of submission to God, and the order he has established in the world, the soul, which is naturally made to conform to its Maker and his determinations, feels the most agreeable self-congratulation from acquiescing in his will; and this invigorates our resolution to consent with cheerfulness, and yield with an equal mind, to all the destinations of our Supreme Father. In like manner also, we acquire habits in every other virtue. Begin then, my brother; try how satisfying righteousness is to thy soul. Taste the sweetness of temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity. Persevere in the practice of these; and soon they will appear lovely and most excellent in thine eyes. Thou wilt prefer them to thy chiefest joys in the world, and fix them still deeper in thy mind, that their abode there may be everlasting.

Thus then are we naturally formed for improvement in holiness and virtue, by that
power

S E R M.
XIV.

power of habit essential to every mind. Indeed, by the same faculty men may grow degenerate and more depraved. Sin may be wrought into their souls, and become habitual to them, which makes all temptations so formidable and dangerous; but this very danger is one mean of strengthening virtue, as will appear afterwards. Virtue and vice are not on a level. The whole constitution of the world is favourable to virtue; and all our circumstances are so ordered as to be excellent means of our advancing towards perfection, of confirming and fixing deep in our souls the habits of virtue, which we are formed for acquiring. Accordingly,—

2. There is a farther provision within ourselves for our improvement. As indeed the whole nature of man was originally formed for this purpose, all its parts were made to unite in promoting it. What then is it that distinguishes a man from other creatures around him, but his Reason and moral Conscience? or, in one word, his Mind,—that principle

ciple of reflection, which is the sole discerner of truth and good. All else comprehended under the name of a man, is of the very same kind with what other creatures below him possess. Reflection then is the peculiar mark of a man, and his proper Self. It bears upon it the characters of superiority and right of commanding, which no power can despoil it of. It brings all affections and all actions to its bar, and with a just authority, pronounces a sentence of approbation or condemnation, as they deserve.

Now, this chief part of Man is entirely on the side of virtue, and is a constant instructor and adviser to the practice of it. By this we are taught what to do. By this also we admire and love truth and righteousness, and hate the contrary. It watches all opportunities of admonishing us to virtue, lets no convenient season pass without making use of it; but by its secret whisperings, endeavours to bend the heart to goodness. No neglect, no affronts, no rebellion against its will, can
make

S E R M.
XIV.

make it desert this cause ; but by unwearied remonstrances against his crimes, it endeavours to reclaim a bad man ; and it encourages the good to hold on, by that home-bred satisfaction with which it fills his soul. Thus then the chief part of man,—the guide of life, is friendly to goodness. This principle of reflection is indeed the very practical principle of virtue, which is to be strengthened by habits, and which itself also aids and assists us in acquiring them. Besides this, there are several affections within us, which constantly tend the same way, and join forces with conscience, to lead us to righteousness. These are love and charity, compassion and gratitude, and the like, which are all natural, if any thing be so ; and it may be here properly observed, that there are none of our passions bad in the original intention of them ; for they were all designed for good purposes. There are no affections directly prejudicial to virtue ; but they have become so, by accidental and unnatural perversions, by mistaken
and

and false judgement concerning the value of their objects, and by the baleful influence of the vicious manners of mankind. Indeed mankind, as they are at present, exhibit to us a view of many passions destructive of goodness, and a deplorable scene of vice and misery; but all these evil passions and affections are only the excess of what are just in themselves, and in their original design. Human life, as it is now carried on, and human nature, are two very different things; the first is actually in a great measure wicked, the last, in its original intention, is wholly turned to goodness and virtue.

3. In the third place: Let us consider what provision is made in our external circumstances, for our improvement; and it will appear that, to those who incline, and endeavour to grow better, the circumstances of the world are truly helpful and friendly.

First: There is no circumstance in life which does not afford opportunities of obtaining knowledge, and of growing in that wisdom which

is

S E R M.
XIV.

is essential to virtue ;—the knowledge I mean of ourselves, and of the value of all objects that raise desire or aversion. In a course of prosperity, if a man will but attend to the little, the very little satisfaction, which even the uninterrupted enjoyment of the conveniences and pleasures of life can afford, to the aspirations of the soul above them, and its strugglings to reach at something higher and more excellent, its satiety, disappointment, disgust, and frequent loathings of such enjoyments, as something below its regard ;—any man who will but attend to these his feelings, will soon perceive, that such objects are very inadequate to the capacity and aim of his immortal soul, that man was not made for these things, but that *they* were made for man,—for his present use and conveniency, while, in the mean time, he ought to be employed in the pursuit of something more noble. This his sense of things will be yet clearer, when he compares these uneasy feelings with that entire satisfaction and unwearied complacency which
the

the soul takes in its application to righteousness; it will work in him a full conviction of the vanity of all worldly things, and thus, of course, turn his mind to the study and exercise of virtue.

But he will be yet farther persuaded of the same thing, and acquire an additional and higher degree of knowledge, from the view of the restlessness and anxiety of many who push eagerly for outward advantages, the hatred, envy, and other cruel passions that rack the hearts of those who cannot attain to such advantages; and the miserable complaints and lamentations, the sorrowing and remorse of all who have been deceived in their expectation of them. Thus all things tend to instruct him concerning his true good; and he is every day learning experience to guide himself happily through life, and to help forward his progress towards perfection. For *Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love*
simplicity

S E R M.
XIV.

*"simplicity and ignorance? and fools hate
knowledge* 2"*

Secondly, Personal afflictions, and the afflictions of those whom we consider almost as ourselves, prove an excellent school for our education in wisdom and virtue. They are even in this respect superior to prosperity, which we often find is apt to render men, who are not upon their guard, careless and indolent with respect to virtuous improvement; to break the native spring and vigour of the soul, and to check its proper and high aspirations. But afflictions are useful, to awaken and rouse the most sluggish and thoughtless, and to compose the mind for calm reflection. By their influence, a man is readily led to recollect his former ways, to revolve at leisure on all the objects of his former regard, to weigh them, and ponder their value. They remove the false disguise wherewith worldly objects have long deceived him, and turn his attention to his soul, which he has hitherto neglected.

* Prov. i. 21, 22.

It is then he begins to be sensible of its worth and dignity, and comparing its nature with all earthly things, he sees and confesses its superior excellence. He sets its aims and operations over against worldly pursuits; which soon opens his eyes, and shows him the poverty and meanness of all outward things. In truth, what a poor opinion must he conceive of them, since now he feels so sensibly, that in his utmost need, they have deserted him, and left a hideous blank in the soul! However rich and good he may have formerly esteemed them, now they must appear poor and naked, and weak and unavailing: And must not this withdraw his love from these vain objects? must he not rise from the shock he has suffered, with an enlightened mind, and a store of experience, to lead him to the study and practice of righteousness, as the most solid and lasting good? Thus he sets out again in life, with new affections, new designs, and new resolutions; and actually with an addition of real virtue. For distrels

S E R M.

XIV

of any kind, makes a man seek for relief and for support, which can be had no where, but in himself. There is in every mans mind, a spring that rises against the pressure of any affliction, to keep it off his spirit. By calling up, then, this strength of soul, and exerting it, he begins to form within himself a habit of patience and fortitude, which carry their own recommendation along with them; and when their value once is known, the soul claims them as its own, and loves to exercise them. In this manner may afflictions raise the mind to high notions, and grand aims of independence on the world; nor will it easily bend afterwards to mean compliances with passion, and low pleasures.

Afflictions then, if we attend carefully to their instructions, will improve us, both in wisdom and virtue, as they convince us of the insufficiency of worldly things, to satisfy the human soul; as, of consequence, they turn our affections and pursuit from outward objects, to the love and practice of virtue; as they

they found in us the habits of pious resignation to God, of calm patience, and contempt of the world; and besides, as they compose our minds to a sedate, considerate, and cautious temper, which is the best foundation of virtue, and is directly opposite to that levity, inattention, and dissipation of thought which are the most fertile soil for vice and folly. Here, by the way, we may observe the unreasonableness of a common objection against the government of God: "That the best of men are so often subjected to suffering and distress." For it is this very distress that is one excellent mean of making them good men. Why, then, should afflictions have any terrible appearance to us? Are they not ministers of God, for good to our souls? And shall we be afraid of what is intended for our advantage, or give such messengers an improper reception? The truth is, that virtue is not our chief and habitual pursuit, else would adversity soon lose its forbidding countenance, and appear in the light of a proper

S E R M.

XIV.

station for improving us in all grace and virtue, which is the just light in which we should view every circumstance.

Thirdly: The world is a state of temptation, danger, and difficulty, in different degrees, to all men. It may, indeed, be thought that these can hardly be of advantage for carrying on our improvement, and leading us to perfection. For do not temptations, at first sight, appear hostile to virtue, tending to lead men quite astray from the ways of God? Do they not expose our integrity to continual danger? and do they not, in fact, mislead and destroy numbers? Do they not frequently beat down firm and repeated resolutions to live well? What difficulty and labour does it cost to overcome them, and maintain our uprightness in the midst of their artful and strong and importunate solicitations?—All this is true; and it is this very thing that makes temptations the means of our higher improvement in virtue, when we are heartily set upon that improvement. For what does

S E R M.
XIV.

does this sense of danger, what do these difficulties produce in a mind well disposed? Do they not engage and oblige it to strict watchfulness and attention? and this attention and watchfulness are the best means of strengthening the soul. They give it constant employment, and frequently call forth all its power. By repeated exercise, this power becomes more and more confirmed and habitual, and according to the different temptations it sets itself against, it acquires habits of different virtues. Thus the man becomes far stronger, and more exalted in mind, and indeed far more virtuous than if he had continued merely innocent, while he had no temptations to struggle against. To conquer temptations and difficulties, gives the soul a view, and raises in it a consciousness, of its dignity, and its real superiority to outward objects; which gradually elevates it above every low desire, makes it aspire to a total independence on the things of the world, and plan out for itself a glorious course of virtue: from

S E R M.

XIV.

which it resolves never to deviate, and to which it is daily more attached.

Let us then keep ever on our guard against the insinuations and assaults of temptation, never relaxing the ardour of our souls, still indulging the innocent entertainments of life with a proper caution and reserve; never abandoning ourselves to security, as thinking all danger over; for danger continues to the end of life: So shall we not suffer from the temptations of the world, but be much improved by them, while our souls increase in wisdom and strength, and in real worth and satisfaction. For we are greatly mistaken, if we look upon this as a severe, grievous, and joyless task. Indeed, it requires us to be attentive and thoughtful; and why are we endued with thought and reflection, but to make use of them? It will also make us disregard the pleasures of the world, and it will lessen them in our esteem; but these are not the joys of a reasonable mind. No, its peculiar satisfactions arise from the rectitude of its own ac-

tions,

tions, the sense of the justness and integrity of its affections, the freedom of its whole conduct, and its independence on foreign things; and this happy consciousness must surely be more near, intimate, and rejoicing, the greater and more numerous the difficulties are, which we overcome, and the more evident and universal our independence really is.

Thus, then, all circumstances are so ordered, as to be excellent means of advancing us towards perfection, of confirming and fixing deep in our souls the habits of virtue, which we are made to acquire. But it must be remembered, that the world is the means of improvement to those only who apply heartily and earnestly to use it for this purpose; and not to the careless and negligent; for to these the world is so far from proving a discipline in virtue, that, in fact, it is a discipline in vice; and wicked habits get daily firmer ground in their hearts. There is provision

S.E.R.M.
XIV.

sciences of life, but those only can attain them who will diligently apply themselves thereto. In like manner, God has provided abundantly for our advancement in goodness; but the slothful and inconsiderate shall never make any progress. They only shall be successful, who join both heart and hand in the work, and apply themselves with constant intenseness of soul, to the study of wisdom, and the practice of virtue. This is the only road to perfection.

In recounting the various means which God has provided for carrying us on to a state of perfection, that great addition to them which the Gospel affords, has been here omitted, with this view, that it might not be thought that God has at any time left mankind altogether without assistance to attain their end; seeing the whole constitution of the world, so far as we are concerned, is ordered for this purpose. But when we join that knowledge which the laws and doctrines of Christ afford,

—that

—that enlargement of our views, by the discovery of life and immortality, the strong assistance of the Spirit of God, and all those motives presented to us by the Gospel, which are so fit to work on our love and aversion, our hopes and our fears, those powerful springs of all our actions,—when we add all this, I say, to that which we have been considering, the provision is so large and abundant, that we cannot conceive any thing wanting which is either necessary or proper to improve us in all virtue. Let not, then, all this preparation be in vain, with respect to us, by a shameful neglect to improve it; but seeing we are made for goodness, seeing, for our advancement herein, our Saviour lived among men, and died our sacrifice,—seeing we have all necessary assistance ready at hand, let us shake off sloth and indolence, and all partial and wrong attachments, and hold on in a course of righteousness, through all the pleasures, and all the pains, to which mortals are exposed.

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42

S E R M O N XV.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENESIS xvii. 1.

—Walk before me, and be thou perfect.

IN the preceding discourse I endeavoured to give you a view of the various and ample provision which God, by his bounty, has made for carrying us forward to perfection. I now proceed,—

S E R M.
XV.

II. IN the next place, to give some directions for our more successful progress towards that state. And—

1. Keep

SERMON
XV.

1. Keep ever in view that perfection for which you are made, as the object you are ever to aspire after; and set up no inferior standard for your imitation. By setting up a low and partial degree of virtue and goodness as our end, we shall be apt to think it a thing easily attainable; and this will lead us to postpone it as a work which, as we imagine, may be performed in a short time, and with little application. As this is one way by which men most dexterously impose on themselves, so nothing can have a more pernicious influence on holiness, than to form mean and low apprehensions of it, and to fancy it consistent with many imperfections. We know by experience, that in all matters which we allow must be done one time or another, but which we consider as easy and soon executed, we are apt to delay them day after day, till we can put them off no longer; and then we are forced to huddle them up the best way we can. In like manner, if we look on virtue as a mean, and therefore an easy thing, we shall

put

put it off from one time to another, till, after long procrastination, some circumstances convince us, that it is necessary to apply to it; and then its difficulties,—difficulties mostly of our own creating present themselves in such a crowd, and so considerable, that the most assiduous labour can hardly overcome them; and with all the care and diligence we can bestow, we must be far short of that perfection to which we might have nearly approached, had we been all the while improving; and this consciousness of shutting ourselves out from that perfection which is, as it were, the hereditary possession of an intelligent soul, must render us then contemptible in our own eyes. And is there any thing so shocking to the soul, as the view of its own worthlessness, and a contempt for itself, which results from acting below its dignity. The only thing that makes us endure such a sight here, is the diversion and amusement of outward things which the soul flies to, in order to prevent it from looking inwards. But this
diversion

S. E. R. M.
XV.

diversion will not always serve; the time will be, when the mind must inspect itself,—and despise itself too, when it attends to the horrid view of its own deformity.

Propose to yourselves then, my brethren, a finished character, where nothing is wanting, and nothing is excessive. Let this be erected as your aim, the end of all your study and endeavours. The greater the end you propose is, your diligence will be greater in proportion, your desires after it will be more vehement, your ambition more animated, and your endeavours more earnest, more constant and more successful. It is with the eye of the soul as with that of the body. As the bodily eye is soon tired with looking at a little, trifling object, while any thing grand and considerable fills it, and keeps its attention fixed; so if you diminish and bring down your idea of virtue, it will have but little influence to fix your attention, to raise and employ the restless activity of your souls, or to inspire you with ardour and resolution in the pursuit of it. The

soul

soul is a being too great and active to rest long on any thing it conceives as trifling. The object must be large to fill it, and extensive to give it employment, ere it can command its regards, or engage it to a hearty and unwearied prosecution of it. Do not then set before yourselves a low picture of holiness, that has some of its parts broken and defaced; but one perfect and completely finished, with all its parts entire. For as by copying after an imperfect and faulty original, you transcribe its defects and blemishes, so by aiming only at an imperfect degree of virtue, you must commit many errors, and never rise to any satisfying height; your endeavours will be faint, your progress slow, and your attainments greatly partial. Would we then reach that glorious height for which we were intended, let us never aim below it, nor let its image ever depart from our souls. Let it be the guide of our conduct, and on all occasions it will teach us what is the good and worthy part. It will be a *light to our feet,*

S E R M.
XV.

feet, and a lamp to our path, and save us from fatal errors. But if we lose sight of this perfection, we shall wander far out of the road that leads to it. If we do not attend to it as the director of all our motions, our course will become vague and crooked, and irregular, as that of persons travelling in the dark. How shall we make progress towards perfection, if we have not formed a just and adequate idea of it, or if we let that idea slip from our minds? We must constantly endeavour to obtain a perfect idea of the character and business of a man, and to keep it ever before us. It will be a judge to whom we can always appeal; and upon asking the question concerning any action; "Is it fit or decent, or becoming a man?" it will always return a just answer. Thus, when presented with any pleasurable solicitation, let us reflect thus:—"Does it become
 " me, who aspire to a superiority to all ex-
 " ternal things, to suffer my reason to be led
 " aside by any of them? Shall I abase and
 " dishonour myself, by meanly yielding to
 " such

" such enticements ; which have no power
 " but what my fancy communicates to them ?
 " Shall I assist this light and flattering object
 " to deceive myself ? and shall I be led away by
 " an airy phantom ? No :—My soul, despise
 " such false and deceitful allurements ; hold
 " on in thy glorious course, and let not any
 " blind and soothing appearance detain thee
 " from proceeding to thy destined end,—the
 " perfection of thy reasonable nature. Keep
 " this perfection ever in thy view, and it
 " shall invigorate thee, and break the force
 " of every temptation."

2. Attend carefully to this perfection, as it
 shines full in the character of God, and in
 the life of our Lord and Redeemer.

The soul of man is of an excellent and Divine
 nature, made after the image of God, and fitted
 to copy after its Maker ; and then is it in its
 right and natural state, when following its O-
 riginal, and imitating his conduct. At pre-
 sent, indeed, in the bulk of mankind, it lies
 under sore oppression ; corrupt passions, and

S E R M.
XV.

attachments to the body and its gratifications, suppress this divine principle, and hinder it from exerting itself. By a constant conversation with outward and sensible things, these passions gain strength, and the Divinity within, is disregarded and neglected. The great security to the command of the passions over reason, is ignorance and darkness; but when these are dispelled, and the soul's great Author stands unveiled before it, with unfading and invincible strength, will it baffle all its foes: And when it is freed from the load of passion, and all obstructions are removed, then will it spring with alacrity to God, and, one after another, transcribe his moral perfections on itself,—his wisdom and holiness, his truth and goodness. These, my brethren, are the proper furniture of a human soul, and require only to be seen, in order to be desired; the mind will soon renew its acquaintance with them; for they are its primitive friends, and so connected with it, that no sooner is it delivered from every foreign and intruding

truding guest, than they readily return to it again. Raise your souls then to God. Often contemplate his character, proclaimed to you by all his works, written in every page of the sacred scriptures, and exemplified in the life of your Saviour. Never forget your relation to the Divine Being; for this will communicate such a dignity to your soul, as will raise you above every mean and unworthy pursuit. Is it for you who partake of the Divinity, to degrade yourselves to the mean condition of the brutes? Are you made to rise and exult over the higher works of God; and will you bear down the aspirations of your soul, and chain your affections to the low objects of this earth? Are you capable of the divine employment and joys of virtue; and will the pleasures of sense satisfy your desires? Will the alliance and near relation of the Supreme Being beget no suitable desire, and excite in you no ambition to behave as the sons of such a Father? Let not your thoughts, my brethren, grovel on the earth; elevate them to

S E R M.
XV.

contemplate the Divinity; and by an habitual attention to the character of your heavenly Father, you will soon come to love it; and this love will fire you with an ambition to resemble Him in those perfections which you admire and esteem. Then shall you be *transformed by the renewing of your mind after the image of God*; then shall you discern and love, and practise his good and acceptable will, and live a real divine life. It will be highly profitable, when set round with temptations of pleasure, or of pain, of present advantage or disadvantage, or when undertaking any action, thus to reflect: "If I could suppose my Saviour placed in my present circumstances, how would He behave Himself?" and at once the good, the just and becoming part will start up before us. Then the sollicitations of all outward things will have small power, and the right conduct will appear in its full force; for in making this supposition, we cannot imagine that any external thing could have force enough to draw
one

one single regard from an all-perfect Being; and thus insensibly shall they lose their influence over us also; and we shall become so enamoured of goodness, that all other things will appear trifling, and below our notice. We know that by constantly attending to any character amongst men, for which we have conceived an high esteem, we are gradually formed into its manners, and have like dispositions wrought in ourselves. But the danger here is, that our veneration for any human character, may shut our eyes against its blemishes, nay, dress them in the garb of virtue, and so imprint the same irregular features in our own minds; but in regarding God, there is no such hazard. Besides, by setting God always before us, we must necessarily and frequently view that order which he has established in the world; as it is by this very order we are led up to him; and likewise the end for which he made us, which frequent view of our end, will fix it deep in the soul, and a love of order will be still increasing. A man

S E R M.
XV.

will naturally reflect thus, " Does every crea-
 " ture around me, endued only with instinct,
 " go regularly on in the course marked out for
 " it? and shall I, who am possessed of under-
 " standing and divine reason, act irregularly
 " and disorderly? Am I placed in connection
 " with other men, to promote the good order
 " and happiness of all? Am I thus honoured
 " to be a fellow-worker with God, and shall
 " I counteract his design, defeat this end, and
 " destroy the order I was sent to advance?
 " No, my soul! conscious of thy dignity, and
 " true to thyself, apply all thy might to pro-
 " mote the order and felicity of the world,
 " by imitating thy great Original." Remem-
 ber thy Creator, O man! remember thy rela-
 tion to Him, and the dignity of thy rational
 part; reverence thyself, and obey the dictates
 of the Divinity within thee; let it not be o-
 verpowered, and its seat usurped by a lawless
 rabble of passions; but keep all these in due
 subjection to the deputy of God, in thy soul.
 Let it be thy resolution to seek its approba-
 tion,

tion, above the highest enjoyment of this world, and to fear its reproaches more than pain or death itself.

S E R M
XV.

3. Never despair of reaching the highest degrees of perfection in goodness and virtue.

It is dangerous to look upon virtue as a very easy thing, for this makes men careless and indolent, and enervates the vigour of the soul ; and it is equally fatal to think it extremely hard, and nearly impracticable ; for this leads us to despair of acquiring it ; and despair of success in this or any undertaking, is an effectual bar to our right performance of it. We can make no improvement in any art whatever, when we lose hopes of attaining it ; then the soul does not exert itself : And why should it, when it is persuaded that the thing is out of our reach ? If we imagine that this perfection in virtue is greatly above us, if we fancy our difficulties insurmountable, we shall never make any attempt to overcome them. While we are surrounded with so many seducing temptations, while we have unruly passions

S E R M.
XV.

to subdue, and labour to undergo, our fondness for these allurements, and our aversion to uneasiness, are ready to break our spirits, Thus these temptations sooth us to indolence and inactivity; and this disposition is encouraged by our experience of the weakness of some former resolutions. The slothful man creates imaginary difficulties, to vindicate his conduct, and give satisfaction to himself; and those which are real, he magnifies to a stupendous height. He saith to himself, *There is a lion in the way; a lion in the streets* *; and the effect of slothfulness is destruction. *I went by the field of the slothful, saith the Wise Man, and beheld the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo it was all overgrown with thorns; and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall of it was broken down* †. *Yet a little sleep, and a little slumber, says the sluggard, a little folding of the hands to sleep* ‡. Go on thus, O man! so shall wickedness and ruin overtake thee. It is by the deceitful insinuations

* Prov. xxvi. 13. † Prov. xxiv. 30. ‡ Prov. vi. 10.

sinuations of sloth and indolence, that we give way to despair, and not from a fair and thorough examination of the difficulties of holiness themselves. Take heed then to yourselves, my brethren, that sloth do not, by its false representations, win you to its party, and fill you with despondency. Remember, if once you give way to its rule, hardly will you shake it off again. It is not easy to rouse the slothful man to activity. All his powers are lulled asleep, and it will not be a small thing that will awaken them. *The sluggard, says Solomon, is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason**. He is not only enslaved by habit, but is confirmed and established, from what he thinks just reasoning; and he is deaf to all after conviction. Beware, then, of this dangerous enemy to virtue, and early strengthen your hearts with resolution, which is of infinite force. *The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns; but the way of the righteous and resolute is made plain.*

* Prov. vii. 16.

1 E R M.
XV.

plain *. There is nothing so easy, which indolence will not represent as hard and troublesome; nor any thing so difficult, which resolution and a willing mind, invigorated by the Spirit of God, will not render easy. The difficulties of a holy life, like a rapid stream, carry the cowardly and slothful down along with them; but the righteous stand firm, supported by the hand of God, from whom they derive constancy and firmness to hold on in the course of holiness, unmoved and intrepid. The righteous, indeed, see the difficulties of virtue; but they know also that such difficulties may be overcome; and the seeing them distinctly as they are, is one great reason of their power over them. Little understanding have they, and small acquaintance with the extensive capacity of the soul of man, who fancy that it cannot rise towards perfection,—to a high degree of command over all the passions and desires of our nature.

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* Prov. xv. 19.

Is not the soul of man of the same species with the Divine Mind? Was it not formed after the image of God, and made for holiness and virtue? Is it not its just and proper object, to imitate its Author? Say, my brethren, has it not in some men raised itself above every external regard, and shaken off each worldly attachment? and does not God continually call us to virtue, and to glory, and teach us, by daily experience, that these alone are our end and our felicity? Can the soul rest satisfied with any thing else? Why did our Saviour come into the world, but to teach us holiness,—to encourage and to lead us to it? Are we not commanded *to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect* *? Shall we then fancy that all this preparation and care has been bestowed to bring about a thing in itself unattainable? Why will we look upon virtue in any eminent degree, as out of the reach of human nature, or regard its difficulties as insurmountable? True, we are, in another life,

* Matt. v. 48.

S E R M.
XV.

to grow and advance in perfection: But there are degrees of perfection belonging to this state; and these are no less than the command of passion, and an habitual and unconquerable adherence to the laws of virtue, which may be acquired by all who will apply with zeal and diligence this way. Has God made every other creature powerful enough to attain the end of its creation, but left man alone unfinished, and ill provided? Is the Supreme Being so deficient in wisdom and power, as to ordain an end, without affording the means of obtaining it? Hath God, who so liberally confers on us every thing for use and convenience in this world, neglected alone to make provision for our improvement in holiness, which He admires and delights in above all things? Can we conceive that He would have placed invincible difficulties in the way of a virtuous progress? Have we not perfection exemplified in the life of our Saviour, to convince us of the contrary? and, what is still nearer to us, has not this

this perfection been, in a good measure, copied in the lives of many of our brethren of mankind? And may not some yet be observed making gradual progress towards it, and, by unwearied exercise, rooting the habits of virtue deep in their souls? Why then should a man despair of gaining that which he is made for? especially when he sees others attaining it, and when he is assured that his heavenly Father will second all his endeavours, and make him conqueror over all his foes? But the cause of mistakes here is, that men do not put forth half their strength, nor in any proportion apply that care and diligent labour, to guide their hearts, and moderate their desires, inclinations, and passions, which they lay out upon a trifling advantage, or a low gratification of pleasure: And hence, for their own present ease, take up this delusive fancy, that all such efforts after high degrees of virtue and self-command, would be fruitless. But let this assurance of Divine assistance fill you, my brethren, with high ambition,

S E R M.
XV.

tion, and firm hopes of advancement in holiness; and this hope of rising to higher and higher degrees of true greatness and felicity will rouse your soul to a more active and steady exercise of all its other faculties. To have any important plan in view, must surely have a mighty influence on a man's whole conduct,—even on those parts of it which have but a remote connection with the end he is pursuing. If, then, perfect holiness be the object of your steady hopes, and consequently of your most ardent wishes, these hopes and desires will exert a visible efficacy on your whole character, will determine all your actions to one end, and bring every disposition of your soul in subordination to it. The soul, inspired with the hopes of resembling God,—big with the enlarged idea of perfection, bends its course with vigour and alacrity towards that perfection, forces through all obstructions, and heedless of all meaner things, aims only at this exalted object of its admiration and love.

Were

ON ASPIRING AFTER PERFECTION.

S E R M
XV.

Were this perfection entirely reserved till our arrival in a future state, the prospect and expectation of it, might in this case have a more feeble and languid influence on the exertions of the mind; and whoever entertains such a notion of the perfection and happiness of a human soul, as if it could not be at all, or but little gained in this life, is commonly found to be very weakly influenced by the hopes of that happiness. Such men are neither acquainted with the nature of their mind, nor its end, nor its proper felicity. Little reflection, it might be thought, would be necessary for perceiving that our perfection begins with the first exercise of our understanding; for no sooner are we capable of instruction than we are capable of improvement in virtue, which may be carried to a considerable degree in this present state. Heaven and hell are not so much different places, as different dispositions, tempers and conditions of mind. To be under the power of rude, intemperate, strong and unnatural passions, is to be

S E R M.
XV.

be in hell. To have the full command of these passions, to be calm and undisturbed within, to enjoy the approbation of conscience, to be pleased with ourselves, and ever active in doing good, is to be in heaven. Thus we may always carry a kind of heaven about with us; and this happy state is an earnest and foretaste of that happier and more perfect heaven that awaits the righteous hereafter. The hopes of this may well inspire us with ambition to get possession of it, and confirm our resolution in the ways of holiness; seeing here, we know by experience the happiness thereof, and behold considerable degrees of it attained by many men our brethren, partakers of the same nature: Which leads me to another direction, to wit,—

4. That the fatal effects of vice in others should guard us against its insinuations; and the virtues of others should rouse our emulation.

It is the first part of wisdom to abstain from sin, and to watch over ourselves, that we be not

not ensnared by it. We cannot live long in the world, without beholding the fatal consequences of vice, and the ruin it introduces into the soul; nor, indeed, is it long before we fall into errors ourselves, and feel, to our painful experience, the misery of vicious behaviour, and wrong dispositions; and if we be not warned by these first and lesser pains, to fly from sin, which is the cause of them, we shall certainly be taught, at a dearer rate, how evil and bitter a thing it is to forsake God and virtue, when our continued wickedness shall more severely correct us, and *our backslidings shall reprove* and torment us. Then shall we be instructed in a dreadful manner! But it is possible—(and it is our wisest part) to learn wisdom from the experience of others who have acted foolishly, and not to wait till our own folly chastise us, when perhaps it will be too late to do us any good. Let us therefore, my brethren, attend to the pernicious nature of vice, displayed to us in the miserable condition of the wicked. Let them

S E R M

XV.

be as beacons, to keep us off those rocks and shelves whereon they have split before us, and made shipwreck of virtue, peace, and felicity. Numerous wrecks float around us, and admonish us to steer our course with great care, that we may avoid the dangers which are on every side. These rocks are our own passions and desires; and if we are negligent in avoiding them, what shall save us from the same fate with our unhappy brethren? Let us therefore shun all appearance of evil, and give a deaf ear to the solicitations of every unreasonable desire and inclination, attending to the admonitions which the miserable and wicked continually offer, loudly calling to us, not to hearken to the enticing flattery of our passions, but to check the beginnings of vice; lest, if we yield once, we be hurried on so fast, as not to stop ere we are as wretched and forlorn as they. There are no bounds to wickedness; the man who once enters its paths, knows not how far he shall go; he has overleaped the limit of virtue, and wanders in the devious
and

and crooked paths of sin. By little and little, he is enticed farther on, led by false appearances, which dazzle him, and keep his view averted from the beauty of righteousness, till at last, perhaps, some heavy misfortune, or dissatisfaction with himself, turn his eyes back upon his former innocent and happy state; but alas! he is far removed from it; shame and horror overcast his soul; he pines at the view of that happiness he once enjoyed, and, but for his own folly, might have enjoyed still; and half despairing ever to regain that blessed situation, disconsolate and forlorn, he mourns his wretched state; or to avoid these confounding reflections, perhaps he plunges deeper into wickedness, headlong and desperate. *Walk not then in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the profane: Avoid it, pass not near it, turn from it, and pass away; but observe it carefully, that it may teach you wisdom to shun evil, and excite you to greater activity in the exercise of your reason; and that*

S. E. E. M.
XV.

It may command and regulate all your affections and propensities.

But all the world is not wicked and miserable. Many there are who keep themselves untainted, — free from the contagious influence of vice; in whom grace and virtue shine with an engaging lustre. Let these draw your regards for another reason, to kindle in your hearts a love of holiness, and to rouse your emulation to contend with them in the glorious strife, who shall be the best and worthiest men. This is a manly and noble emulation, a rivalry consistent with the strongest mutual affection, where all may gain the height of their wishes, and where no partial interest can beget any aversion or dislike. It is not to contend for a superiority in power or honour, or the greatest share of wealth or sensual pleasure, where interests may clash; but it is, to strive who shall be most like unto God; whose affections shall be most regular, and in best order; who shall be most independent on outward things, which set the bulk of men at variance;

variance; who shall be most benevolent and useful to the world,—not for the sake of applause, but for the love of beneficence itself. Look round you for such good men; be followers of them as far as they are followers of what is right. There is not indeed any one person whom it is safe to imitate in every thing; but mark what is good and commendable in each, and strive not only to equal, but to surpass him. From one man learn wisdom and knowledge, from another piety and love, from a third a pure, temperate, and modest spirit, from a fourth steadiness and consistency of character, and from another patience and fortitude of soul. Thus chuse out the most eminent and undoubted virtues in particular characters, and endeavour to make them all your own. So shall you grow in strength and real beauty, nourishing all those graces that shall render you good and great and worthy members of human society, still preparing yourselves to be members of a society more excellent and divine hereafter. Be not ashamed,

S E R M.
XV.

my brethren, when another man possesses greater affluence, or receives louder applause from the world than you do; this is none of your concern, and the Author of nature has put it out of your power. But good reason you have indeed to be ashamed, if any man possesses more of virtue; for here you alone are to blame, if you be not equal with him. Rouse then thy sleeping emulation, O man! For shame! let not others, naturally no stronger than thyself, outstrip thee in the course of glory, and of virtue. What, though thou art inferior to some in strength of genius, and liveliness of imagination; hast thou not the same faculty of reason,—the seeds of the same good affections, and the assistance of the same Divine Spirit? What then should prevent thy being as discreet, as just, as temperate, as kind, as brave and resolute in holiness as others? Consider that cloud of witnesses which surrounds thee, who have run the race set before thee, *have fought the good fight, did finish their course with joy, and are now out of the* reach

SERMON
XV.

reach of vice or misery. Think thou hearest them calling to thee from heaven! Follow our example; despise the pleasures of sense; manfully disengage thyself from an immoderate attachment to them; shake off sloth and fear; and with unremitting vigour climb the steep ascent which leads to this peaceful abode; so only shalt thou reach this dignity and perfection. Let not thy endeavours be faint and languid; but earnest and constant, and they will prove successful. Thus did we reach this glory, and so shalt thou likewise, if thou shew the same diligence."

SEEING, therefore, we may attain to that height of perfection and happiness,—seeing we were made for this purpose alone, and our Saviour died to promote it; seeing God has made such large provision for leading us to it, how shameful! to let sloth, negligence, cowardice, or a sensual spirit, destroy all this goodly preparation, and prevent our perfection and felicity. How galling will the reflection

S E R M.

XV.

reflection be hereafter, that we have neglected so many opportunities of improving the virtue of our souls, which will then be sadly disordered; and from whence joy and peace shall have taken their flight? Then shall we lament our folly, when it will stand us in little stead; and without hopes of deliverance, we shall thus bemoan ourselves: "Now is my soul laid desolate. " I have nothing with which to entertain myself;—no foundation to rest upon. Others, " who wisely improved their minds, are now " reaping the fruit of their diligence, while " I,—sad outcast from the society of the righteous and happy, am excluded from all enjoyment,—have no pleasing hopes to sustain me; but am left a defenceless prey to " the just, the incessant upbraidings of my " neglected mind, and to the violence of ungovernable and cruel passions. O wretched " man! that I am, who, with the fair prospect of peace and perfection inviting me to " accept of them, madly contemned the offer, " and chose the path of wickedness and folly, " which

“which hath brought me to this deplorable
“fate,—to this misery, from which there is
“no relief!”

S E R M.
XV.

Would you, my brethren, avoid these
severe and agonizing reflections,—this o-
verwhelming self-condemnation, call forth
all your resolution; employ every talent
and every opportunity to advance, through
holiness, to the perfection of your nature;
that ye may be thought fit to sit down with
the great inhabitants of heaven, and to par-
take of *the inheritance of saints in light and
glory.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

NOVEMBER 1954

...to the mine, from which...

01-73497 on 4

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MUSEUM

BRITANNICVM

the great importance of having a good

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

1944

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